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EDITH BRECKENRIDGE

GREAT FRENCH SHORT STORIES

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Edited by

Lewis Melville

&

Reginald Hargreaves

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PREFACE

A VOLUME of this description must be as notable for its omissions as for the matter which it includes.

The editors have essayed to select the most characteristic examples of the French short-story writers, and by their self-imposed limits they automatically lay themselves open to this charge of omission. To think of French literature at all brings to the mind so many eminent names, not to be found in these pages, that the question of their absence calls for a word or two of explanation. Fundamentally that explanation has its roots in the differing conception as to what exactly constitutes a short story, which pertains with our Gallic neighbours and ourselves. French writers, especially those of the mid-nineteenth century, did not indulge in stint! "Short" to them bore a very different responsibility of interpretation than it does in more modern minds, as witness the light-hearted manner in which Benjamin Constant dismissed an effort of well over twenty thousand words as a casual "anecdote"! To many writers of repute, to indulge in the short-story form at all was rather in the nature of a concession. "Conversations," as those of Scudéry, we have; "Memoirs" galore; but of the short story proper there exists a leaner store than many might imagine. If this applies to the giants of the nineteenth century, in no less degree does it pertain to some of the more eminent writers of later date—Murger, Marivaux, Lamartine, George Sand, Proust, Maurice Barrés, André Maurois; for these the short-story form does not exist. And since "extracts" have no place in a volume of this description, their work must, necessarily, be unrepresented.

It has been the object of the editors of this book to present the reader, not only with the most characteristic efforts of the admitted writers of short stories, but no less with the best examples of the writings of those authors whose usual medium was the novel proper. The stories are presented in chronological order, in the belief that it will add to the interest of the reader to trace the development of the "Conte" through successive generations of its exponents. The political history of a country is inevitably reflected in that country's literature. Thus, the literary sterility of the gap which appears between the years which saw the beginnings of the Revolution, down to the period which ended with the fall of the first Napoleon, can easily be accounted for by the fact that, throughout this epoch, France was too busy doing things to have time to write about them. In fact, it may be said that from 1779 to 1815 the only form of fiction in which the French indulged was the writing of political pamphlets and *assignats!*

LEWIS MELVILLE,
REGINALD HARGREAVES.

1928

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'TIS OF AUCASSIN AND OF NICOLETTE

(*First transcribed in the thirteenth century*)

(Translated by EUGÈNE MASON)

Who will deign to hear the song
Solace of a captive's wrong,
Telling how two children met,
Aucassin and Nicolette;
How by grievous pains distraught,
Noble deeds the varlet wrought
For his love, and her bright face!
Sweet my rhyme, and full of grace,
Fair my tale, and debonair.
He who lists—though full of care,
Sore astonied, much amazed,
All cast down, by men mispraised,
Sick in body, sick in soul,
Hearing shall be glad and whole,
So sweet the tale.

Now they say and tell and relate:

How the Count Bougars of Valence made war on Count Garin of Beaucaire, war so great, so wonderful, and so mortal, that never dawned the day but that he was at the gates and walls and barriers of the town, with a hundred knights and ten thousand men-at-arms, on foot and on horse. So he burned the Count's land, and spoiled his heritage, and dealt death to his men. The Count Garin of Beaucaire was full of years, and frail; he had long outworn his day. He had no heir, neither son nor daughter, save one only varlet, and he was such as I will tell you. Aucassin was the name of the lad. Fair he was, and pleasant

to look upon, tall and shapely of body in every whit of him. His hair was golden, and curled in little rings about his head; he had grey and dancing eyes, a clear, oval face, a nose high and comely, and he was so gracious in all good graces that nought in him was found to blame, but good alone. But Love, that high prince, so utterly had cast him down, that he cared not to become knight, neither to bear arms, nor to tilt at tourneys, nor yet to do aught that it became his name to do.

His father and his mother spake him thus—

"Son, don now thy mail, mount thy horse, keep thy land, and render aid to thy men. Should they see thee amongst them the better will the men-at-arms defend their bodies and their substance, thy fief and mine."

"Father," said Aucassin, "why speakest thou in such fashion to me? May God give me nothing of my desire if I become knight, or mount to horse, or thrust into the press to strike other or be smitten down, save only that thou give me Nicolette, my sweet friend, whom I love so well."

"Son," answered the father, "this may not be. Put Nicolette from mind. For Nicolette is but a captive maid, come hither from a far country, and the Viscount of this town bought her with money from the Saracens, and set her in this place. He hath nourished and baptized her, and held her at the font. On a near day he will give her to some young bachelor, who will gain her bread in all honour. With this what hast thou to do? Ask for a wife, and I will find thee the daughter of a king, or a count. Were he the richest man in France his daughter shalt thou have, if so thou wilt."

"Faith, my father," said Aucassin, "what honour of all this world would not Nicolette, my very sweet friend, most richly become! Were she Empress of Byzantium or of Allemaigne, or Queen of France or England, low enough would be her degree, so noble is she, so courteous and debonair, and gracious in all good graces."

Now is sung:

Aucassin was of Beaucaire,
Of the mighty castle there,
But his heart was ever set
On his fair friend, Nicolette.
Small he heeds his father's blame,
Or the harsh words of his dame.
"Fool, to weep the livelong day,
Nicolette trips light and gay.
Scouring she from far Carthage,
Bought of Paynims for a wage.
Since a wife beseems thee good
Take a wife of wholesome blood."
"Mother, naught for this I care,
Nicolette is debonair;
Slim the body, fair the face,
Make my heart a lighted place;
Love has set her as my peer,
Too sweet, my dear."

Now they say and tell and relate:

When the Count Garin of Beaucaire found that in nowise could he withdraw Aucassin his son from the love of Nicolette, he sought out the Viscount of the town, who was his man, and spake him thus—

"Sir Count, send Nicolette your god-child straightly from this place. Cursed be the land wherefrom she was carried to this realm; for because of her I lose Aucassin, who will not become knight, nor do aught that it becometh knight to do. Know well that were she once within my power I would hurry her to the fire; and look well to yourself, for you stand in utmost peril and fear."

"Sire," answered the Viscount, "this lies heavy upon me, that ever Aucassin goes and he comes seeking speech with my ward. I have bought her with my money, and nourished and baptized her, and held her at the font. Moreover, I am fain to give her to some young bachelor, who will gain her bread in all honour. With this Aucassin your son had nought to do. But since this is your will and your pleasure, I will send her to so far a country that nevermore shall he see her with his eyes."

"Walk warily," replied the Count Garin, "for great evil easily may fall to you of this."

So they went their ways.

Now the Viscount was a very rich man, and had a rich palace standing within a garden. In a certain chamber of an upper floor he set Nicolette in ward, with an old woman to bear her company, and to watch; and he put there bread and meat and wine and all things for their need. Then he placed a seal upon the door, so that none might enter in, nor issue forth, save only that there was a window looking on the garden, strict and close, whereby they breathed a little fresh air.

Now is sung:

Nicolette is prisoned fast,
In a vaulted chamber cast,
Shaped and carven wondrous well,
Painted as by miracle.
At the marble casement stayed
On her elbow leaned the maid;
Golden showed her golden hair,
Softly curved her eyebrows rare,
Fair her face, and brightly flushed,
Sweeter maiden never blushed.
In the garden from her room
She might watch the roses bloom,
Hear the birds make tender moan;
Then she knew herself alone.
"'Lack, great pity 'tis to place
Maid in such an evil case.
Aucassin, my liege, my squire,
Friend, and dear, and heart's desire,
Since thou dost not hate me quite
Men have done me foul despite,
Sealed me in this vaulted room,
Thrust me to this bitter doom.
But by God, Our Lady's Son,
Soon will I from here begone,
So it be won."

Now they say and tell and relate:

Nicolette was prisoned in the chamber, as you have heard and known. The cry and the haro went through all the land that Nicolette was stolen away. Some said that she had

fled the country, and some that the Count Garin of Beaucaire had done her to death. Whatever man may have rejoiced, Aucassin had no joy therein, so he sought out the Viscount of the town and spake him thus—

"Sir Viscount, what have you done with Nicolette, my very sweet friend, the thing that most I love in all the world? Have you borne her off, or hidden her from my sight? Be sure that should I die hereof, my blood will be required of you, as is most just, for I am slain of your two hands, since you steal from me the thing that most I love in all the world."

"Fair sire," answered the Viscount, "put this from mind. Nicolette is a captive maid whom I brought here from a far country. For her price I trafficked with the Saracens, and I have bred and baptized her, and held her at the font. I have nourished her duly, and on a day will give her to some young bachelor who will gain her bread in honourable fashion. With this you have nought to do; but only to wed the daughter of some count or king. Beyond this, what profit would you have, had you become her lover, and taken her to your bed? Little enough would be your gain therefrom, for your soul would lie tormented in Hell all the days of all time, so that to Paradise never should you win."

"In Paradise what have I to do? I care not to enter, but only to have Nicolette, my very sweet friend, whom I love so dearly well. For into Paradise go none but such people as I will tell you of. There go those agèd priests, and those old cripples, and the maimed, who all day long and all night cough before the altars, and in the crypts beneath the churches; those who go in worn old mantles and old tattered habits; who are naked, and barefoot, and full of sores; who are dying of hunger and of thirst, of cold and of wretchedness. Such as these enter in Paradise, and with them have I nought to do. But in Hell will I go. For to Hell go the fair clerks and the fair knights who are slain in the tourney and the great wars, and the stout archer and

the loyal man. With them will I go. And there go the fair and courteous ladies, who have friends, two or three, together with their wedded lords. And there pass the gold and the silver, the ermine and all rich furs, harpers and minstrels, and the happy of the world. With these will I go, so only that I have Nicolette, my very sweet friend, by my side."

"Truly," cried the Viscount, "you talk idly, for never shall you see her more; yea, and if perchance you spoke together, and your father heard thereof, he would burn both me and her in one fire, and yourself might well have every fear."

"This lies heavy upon me," answered Aucassin.

Thus he parted from the Viscount making great sorrow. Now is sung:

Aucassin departed thus
Sad at heart and dolorous;
Gone is she his fairest friend,
None may comfort give or mend,
None by counsel make good end.
To the palace turned he home,
Climed the stair, and sought his room.
In the chamber all alone
Bitterly he made his moan,
Presently began to weep
For the love he might not keep.
"Nicolette, so gent, so sweet,
Fair the faring of thy feet,
Fair thy laughter, sweet thy speech,
Fair our playing each with each,
Fair thy clasping, fair thy kiss,
Yet it endeth all in this.
Since from me my love is ta'en
I misdoubt that I am slain;
Sister, sweet friend."

Now they say and tell and relate:

Whilst Aucassin was in the chamber lamenting Nicolette, his friend, the Count Bougars of Valence, wishful to end the war, pressed on his quarrel, and setting his pikemen and horsemen in array, drew near the castle to take it by storm.

Then the cry arose, and the tumult; and the knights and the men-at-arms took their weapons, and hastened to the gates and the walls to defend the castle, and the burgesses climbed to the battlements, flinging quarrels and sharpened darts upon the foe. Whilst the siege was so loud and perilous the Count Garin of Beaucaire sought the chamber where Aucassin lay mourning, assotted upon Nicolette, his very sweet friend, whom he loved so well.

"Ha, son," cried he, "craven art thou and shamed, that seest thy best and fairest castle so hardly beset. Know well that if thou lose it thou art a naked man. Son, arm thyself lightly, mount to horse, keep thy land, aid thy men, hurtle into the press. Thou needest not to strike another, neither to be smitten down, but if they see thee amongst them, the better will they defend their goods and their bodies, thy land and mine. And thou art so stout and strong that very easily thou canst do this thing, as is but right."

"Father," answered Aucassin, "what sayest thou now? May God give me nought that I require of Him if I become knight, or mount to horse, or thrust into the press to strike knight or be smitten down, save only thou givest me Nicolette, my sweet friend, whom I love so well."

"Son," replied the father, "this can never be. Rather will I suffer to lose my heritage, and go bare of all, than that thou shouldest have her, either as woman or as dame."

So he turned without farewell. But when Aucassin saw him part he stayed him, saying—

"Father, come now, I will make a true bargain with thee."

"What bargain, fair son?"

"I will arm me, and thrust into the press on such bargain as this, that if God bring me again safe and sound, thou wilt let me look on Nicolette, my sweet friend, so long that I may have with her two words or three, and kiss her one only time."

"I pledge my word to this," said the father.

Of this covenant had Aucassin much joy.

Now is sung:

Aucassin the more was fain
Of the kiss he sought to gain,
Rather than his coffers hold
A hundred thousand marks of gold.
At the call his squire drew near,
Armed him fast in battle gear;
Shirt and hauberk donned the lad,
Laced the helmet on his head,
Girt his golden-hilted sword,
Came the war-horse at his word,
Gripped the buckler and the lance,
At the stirrups cast a glance;
Then most brave from plume to heel
Pricked the charger with the steel,
Called to mind his absent dear,
Passed the gateway without fear
Straight to the fight.

Now they say and tell and relate:

Aucassin was armed and horsed as you have heard. God! how bravely showed the shield about his neck, the helmet on his head, and the fringes of the baldric upon his left thigh. The lad was tall and strong, slender and comely to look upon, and the steed he bestrode was great and speedy, and fiercely had he charged clear of the gate. Now think not that he sought spoil of oxen and cattle, nor to smite others and himself escape. Nay, but of all this he took no heed. Another was with him, and he thought so dearly upon Nicolette, his fair friend, that the reins fell from his hand, and he struck never a blow. Then the charger, yet smarting from the spur, bore him into the battle, amidst the thickest of the foe, so that hands were laid upon him from every side, and he was made prisoner. Thus they spoiled him of shield and lance, and forthwith led him from the field a captive, questioning amongst themselves by what death he should be slain. When Aucassin marked their words,

"Ha, God," cried he, "sweet Creature, these are my mortal foes who lead me captive, and who soon will strike off my head; and when my head is smitten, never again may I have fair speech with Nicolette, my sweet friend,

whom I hold so dear. Yet have I a good sword, and my horse is yet unblown. Now if I defend me not for her sake, may God keep her never, should she love me still."

The varlet was hardy and stout, and the charger he bestrode was right fierce. He plucked forth his sword, and smote suddenly on the right hand and on the left, cutting sheer through nasal and headpiece, gauntlet and arm, making such ruin around him as the wild boar deals when brought to bay by hounds in the wood; until he had struck down ten knights, and hurt seven more, and won clear of the *mêlée*, and rode back at utmost speed, sword in his hand.

The Count Bougars of Valence heard tell that his men were about to hang Aucassin, his foe, in shameful wise, so he hastened to the sight, and Aucassin passed him not by. His sword was yet in hand, and he struck the Count so fiercely upon the helm, that the headpiece was cleft and shattered upon the head. So bewildered was he by the stroke that he tumbled to the ground, and Aucassin stretched forth his hand, and took him, and led him captive by the nasal of the helmet, and delivered him to his father.

"Father," said Aucassin, "behold the foe who wrought such war and mischief upon you! Twenty years hath this war endured, and none was there to bring it to an end."

"Fair son," replied his father, "better are such deeds as these than foolish dreams."

"Father," returned Aucassin, "preach me no preachings; but carry out our bargain."

"Ha, what bargain, fair son?"

"How now, father, hast thou returned from the market? By my head, I will remember, whosoever may forget; so close is it to my heart. Didst thou not bargain with me when I armed me and fared into the press, that if God brought me again safe and sound, thou wouldst grant me sight of Nicolette, my sweet friend, so long that I might have with her two words or three, and kiss her once? Such was the bargain, so be thou honest dealer."

"I," cried the father, "God aid me never should I keep such terms. Were she here I would set her in the flames, and thou thyself might well have every fear."

"Is this the very end?" said Aucassin.

"So help me God," said his father; "yea."

"Certes," said Aucassin, "grey hairs go ill with a lying tongue."

"Count of Valence," said Aucassin, "thou art my prisoner?"

"Sire," answered the Count, "it is verily and truly so."

"Give me thy hand," said Aucassin.

"Sire, as you wish."

So each took the other's hand.

"Plight me thy faith," said Aucassin, "that so long as thou drawest breath, never shall pass a day but thou shalt deal with my father in shameful fashion, either in goods or person, if so thou canst!"

"Sire, for God's love make me not a jest, but name me a price for my ransom. Whether you ask gold or silver, steed or palfrey, pelt or fur, hawk or hound, it shall be paid."

"What!" said Aucassin; "art thou not my prisoner?"

"Truly, sire," said the Count Bougars.

"God aid me never," quoth Aucassin, "but I send thy head flying, save thou plight me such faith as I said."

"In God's name," cried he, "I plight such affiance as seems most meet to thee."

He pledged his troth, so Aucassin set him upon a horse, and brought him into a place of surety, himself riding by his side.

Now is sung:

When Count Garin knew his son
Aucassin still loved but one,
That his heart was ever set
Fondly on fond Nicolette;
Straight a prison he hath found,
Paved with marble, walled around
Where in vault beneath the earth
Aucassin made little mirth,

But with wailing filled his cell
In such wise as now I tell.
" Nicolette, white lily-flow'r,
Sweetest lady found in bow'r;
Sweet as grape that brimmeth up
Sweetness in the spicèd cup.
On a day this chanced to you;
Out of Limousin there drew
One, a pilgrim, sore adread,
Lay in pain upon his bed,
Tossed, and took with fear his breath,
Very dolent, near to death.
Then you entered, pure and white,
Softly to the sick man's sight,
Raised the train that swept adown,
Raised the ermine-bordered gown,
Raised the smock, and bared to him
Daintily each lovely limb.
Then a wondrous thing befell,
Straight he rose up sound and well,
Left his bed, took cross in hand,
Sought again his own dear land.
Lily-flow'r, so white, so sweet,
Fair the faring of thy feet,
Fair thy laughter, fair thy speech,
Fair our playing, each with each.
Sweet thy kisses, soft thy touch,
All must love thee over much.
'Tis for thee that I am thrown
In this vaulted cell alone;
'Tis for thee that I attend
Death, that comes to make an end,
For thee, sweet friend."

Now they say and tell and relate:

Aucassin was set in prison as you have heard tell, and Nicolette for her part was shut in the chamber. It was in the time of summer heat, in the month of May, when the days are warm, long and clear, and the nights coy and serene. Nicolette lay one night sleepless on her bed, and watched the moon shine brightly through the casement, and listened to the nightingale plain in the garden. Then she bethought her of Aucassin, her friend, whom she loved so well. She called also to mind the Count Garin of Beaucaire, her mortal foe, and feared greatly to remain lest her hiding-place should be told to him, and she be put to death in some shameful

fashion. She made certain that the old woman who held her in ward was sound asleep. So she rose, and wrapped herself in a very fair silk mantle, the best she had, and taking the sheets from her bed and the towels of her bath, knotted them together to make so long a rope as she was able, tied it about a pillar of the window, and slipped down into the garden. Then she took her skirt in both hands, the one before, and the other behind, and kilted her lightly against the dew which lay thickly upon the grass, and so passed through the garden. Her hair was golden, with little love-locks; her eyes blue and laughing; her face most dainty to see, with lips more vermeil than ever was rose or cherry in the time of summer heat; her teeth white and small; her breasts so firm that they showed beneath her vesture like two rounded nuts; so frail was she about the girdle that your two hands could have spanned her, and the daisies that she brake with her feet in passing, showed altogether black against her instep and her flesh, so white was the fair young maiden.

She came to the postern, and unbarring the gate, issued forth upon the streets of Beaucaire, taking heed to keep within the shadows, for the moon shone very bright, and thus she fared until she chanced upon the tower where her lover was prisoned. The tower was buttressed with pieces of wood in many places, and Nicolette hid herself amongst the pillars, wrapped close in her mantle. She set her face to a crevice of the tower, which was old and ruinous, and there she heard Aucassin weeping within, making great sorrow for the sweet friend whom he held so dear; and when she had hearkened awhile she began to speak.

Now is sung:

Nicolette, so bright of face,
Leaned within this buttressed place,
Heard her lover weep within,
Marked the woe of Aucassin.
Then in words her thought she told,
"Aucassin, fond heart and bold,
What avails thine heart should ache
For a Paynim maiden's sake?

Ne'er may she become thy mate,
Since we prove thy father's hate,
Since thy kinsfolk hate me too;
What for me is left to do?
Nothing, but to seek the strand,
Pass o'er sea to some far land."
Shore she then one golden tress,
Thrust it in her love's duress;
Aucassin hath seen the gold
Shining bright in that dark hold,
Took the lock at her behest,
Kissed and placed it in his breast,
Then once more his eyes were wet
For Nicolette.

Now they say and tell and relate:

When Aucassin heard Nicolette say that she would fare into another country, he was filled with anger.

"Fair sweet friend," said he, "this be far from thee, for then wouldst thou have slain me. And the first man who saw thee, if so he might, would take thee forthwith and carry thee to his bed, and make thee his leman. Be sure that if thou wert found in any man's bed, save it be mine, I should not need a dagger to pierce my heart and slay me. Certes, no; wait would I not for a knife; but on the first wall or the nearest stone would I cast myself, and beat out my brains altogether. Better to die so foul a death as this, than know thee to be in any man's bed, save mine."

"Aucassin," said she, "I doubt that thou lovest me less than thy words; and that my love is fonder than thine."

"Alack," cried Aucassin, "fair sweet friend, how can it be that thy love should be so great? Woman cannot love man, as man loves woman; for woman's love is in the glance of her eye, and the blossom of her breast, and the tip of the toe of her foot; but the love of man is set deep in the hold of his heart, from whence it cannot be torn away."

Whilst Aucassin and Nicolette were thus at odds together, the town watch entered the street, bearing naked swords beneath their mantles, for Count Garin had charged them strictly, once she were taken, to put her to death. The

warder from his post upon the tower marked their approach, and as they drew near heard them speaking of Nicolette, menacing her with death.

"God," said he, "it is great pity that so fair a damsel should be slain, and a rich alms should I give if I could warn her privily, and so she escape the snare; for of her death Aucassin, my liege, were dead already, and truly this were a piteous case."

Now is sung:

Brave the warder, full of guile,
Straight he sought some cunning wile;
Sought and found a song betime,
Raised this sweet and pleasant rhyme.
"Lady of the loyal mind,
Slender, gracious, very kind,
Gleaming head and golden hair,
Laughing lips and eyes of vair!
Easy, Lady, 'tis to tell
Two have speech who love full well.
Yet in peril are they met,
Set the snare, and spread the net.
Lo, the hunters draw this way,
Cloaked, with privy knives, to slay.
Ere the huntsmen spie the chace
Let the quarry haste apace
And keep her well."

Now they say and tell and relate:

"Ah," said Nicolette, "may the soul of thy father and of thy mother find sweetest rest, since in so fair and courteous a manner hast thou warned me. So God please, I will indeed keep myself close, and may He keep me too."

She drew the folds of her cloak about her, and crouched in the darkness of the pillars till the watch had passed beyond; then she bade farewell to Aucassin, and bent her steps to the castle wall. The wall was very ruinous, and mended with timber, so she climbed the fence, and went her way till she found herself between wall and moat. Gazing below, she saw that the fosse was very deep and perilous, and the maid had great fear.

"Ah, God," cried she, "sweet Creature, should I fall,

my neck must be broken; and if I stay, to-morrow shall I be taken, and men will burn my body in a fire. Yet were it better to die, now, in this place, than to be made a show to-morrow in the market."

She crossed her brow, and let herself slide down into the moat, and when she reached the bottom, her fair feet and pretty hands, which had never learned that they could be hurt, were so bruised and wounded that the blood came from them in places a many; yet knew she neither ill nor dolour because of the mightiness of her fear. But if with pain she had entered in, still more it cost her to issue forth. She called to mind that it were death to tarry, and by chance found there a stake of sharpened wood, which those within the keep had flung forth in their defence of the tower. With this she cut herself a foothold, one step above the other, till with extreme labour she climbed forth from the moat. Now the forest lay but the distance of two bolts from a cross-bow, and ran some thirty leagues in length and breadth; moreover, within were many wild beasts and serpents. She feared these greatly, lest they should do her a mischief; but presently she remembered that should men lay hands upon her, they would lead her back to the city to burn her at the fire.

Now is sung:

Nicolette the fair, the fond,
Climbed the fosse and won beyond;
There she kneeled her, and implored
Very help of Christ the Lord.
" Father, King of majesty,
Where to turn I know not, I.
So, within the woodland gloom
Wolf and boar and lion roam,
Fearful things, with rav'ning maw,
Rending tusk and tooth and claw.
Yet, if all adread I stay,
Men will come at break of day,
Treat me to their heart's desire,
Burn my body in the fire.
But by God's dear majesty
Such a death I will not die;

Since I die, ah, better then
Trust the boar than trust to men.
Since all's evil, men and beast,
Choose I the least."

Now they say and tell and relate:

Nicolette made great sorrow in such manner as you have heard. She commended herself to God's keeping, and fared on until she entered the forest. She kept upon the fringes of the woodland, for dread of the wild beasts and reptiles; and hiding herself within some thick bush, sleep overtook her, and she slept fast until six hours of the morn, when shepherds and herdsmen come from the city to lead their flocks to pasture between the wood and the river. The shepherds sat by a clear, sweet spring, which bubbled forth on the outskirts of the greenwood, and spreading a cloak upon the grass, set bread thereon. Whilst they ate together, Nicolette awoke at the song of the birds and the laughter, and hastened to the well.

"Fair children," said she, "God have you in His keeping."

"God bless you also," answered one who was more fluent of tongue than his companions.

"Fair child," said she, "do you know Aucassin, the son of Count Garin of this realm?"

"Yes, we know him well."

"So God keep you, pretty boy," said she, "as you tell him that within this wood there is a fair quarry for his hunting; and if he may take her he would not part with one of her members for a hundred golden marks nor for five hundred, nay, nor for aught that man can give."

Then looking upon her steadfastly, their hearts were troubled, the maid was so beautiful.

"Will I tell him?" cried he who was readier of word than his companions. "Woe to him who speaks of it ever, or tells Aucassin what you say. You speak not truth but faery, for in all this forest there is no beast—neither stag, nor lion, nor boar—one of whose legs would be worth two pence, or three at the very best, and you talk of five hundred marks of

gold. Woe betide him who believes your story, or shall spread it abroad. You are a fay, and no fit company for such as us, so pass upon your road."

"Ah, fair child," answered she, "yet you will do as I pray. For this beast is the only medicine that may heal Aucassin of his hurt. And I have here five sous in my purse, take them, and give him my message. For within three days must he hunt this chace, and if within three days he find not the quarry, never may he cure him of his wound."

"By my faith," said he, "we will take the money, and if he comes this way we will give him your message, but certainly we will not go and look for him."

"As God pleases," answered she.

So she bade farewell to the shepherds, and went her way. Now is sung:

Nicolette as you heard tell
Bade the shepherd lads farewell,
Through deep woodlands warily
Fared she 'neath the leafy tree;
Till the grass-grown way she trod
Brought her to a forest road,
Whence, like fingers on a hand,
Forked sev'n paths throughout the land.
There she called to heart her love,
There bethought her she would prove
Whether true her lover's vows.
Plucked she then young sapling boughs,
Grasses, leaves that branches yield,
Oak shoots, lilies of the field;
Built a lodge with frond and flow'r,
Fairest mason, fairest bow'r!
Swore then by the truth of God
Should her lover come that road,
Nor for love of her who made
Dream a little in its shade,
'Spite his oath no true love, he,
Nor fond heart, she.

Now they say and tell and relate:

Nicolette builded the lodge, as you have heard; very pretty it was and very dainty, and well furnished, both outside and in, with a tapestry of flowers and of leaves.

Then she withdrew herself a little way from the bower, and hid within a thicket to spy what Aucassin would do. And the cry and the haro went through all the realm that Nicolette was lost. Some had it that she had stolen away, and others that Count Garin had done her to death. Whoever had joy thereof, Aucassin had little pleasure. His father, Count Garin, brought him out of his prison, and sent letters to the lords and ladies of those parts bidding them to a very rich feast, so that Aucassin, his son, might cease to dote. When the feast was at its merriest, Aucassin leaned against the musicians' gallery, sad and all discomforted. No laugh had he for any jest, since she, whom most he loved, was not amongst the ladies set in hall. A certain knight marked his grief, and coming presently to him, said—

"Aucassin, of such fever as yours I, too, have been sick. I can give you good counsel, if you are willing to listen."

"Sir knight," said Aucassin, "great thanks; good counsel, above all things, I would hear."

"Get to horse," said he; "take your pleasure in the woodland, amongst flowers and bracken and the songs of the birds. Perchance, who knows? you may hear some word of which you will be glad."

"Sir knight," answered Aucassin, "great thanks; this I will do."

He left the hall privily, and went down-stairs to the stable where was his horse. He caused the charger to be saddled and bridled, then put foot in stirrup, mounted, and left the castle, riding till he entered the forest, and so by adventure came upon the well whereby the shepherd lads were sitting, and it was then about three hours after noon. They had spread a cloak upon the grass, and were eating their bread, with great mirth and jollity.

Now is sung:

Round about the well were set
Martin, Robin, Esmeret;
Jolly shepherds, gaily met,
Frulin, Jack and Aubriet.

Laughed the one, " God keep in ward
Aucassin, our brave young lord.
Keep besides the damsel fair,
Blue of eye and gold of hair,
Gave us wherewithal to buy
Cate and sheath knife presently,
Horn and quarter staff and fruit,
Shepherd's pipe and country flute;
God make him well."

Now they say and tell and relate:

When Aucassin marked the song of the herd-boys he called to heart Nicolette, his very sweet friend, whom he held so dear. He thought she must have passed that way, so he struck his horse with the spurs and came quickly to the shepherds.

" Fair children, God keep you."

" God bless you," replied he who was readier of tongue than his fellows.

" Fair children," said he, " tell over again the song that you told but now."

" We will not tell it," answered he who was more fluent of speech than the others; " sorrow be his who sings it to you, fair sir."

" Fair children," returned Aucassin, " do you not know me? "

" Oh yes, we know well that you are Aucassin, our young lord; but we are not your men; we belong to the Count."

" Fair children, sing me the song once more, I pray you! "

" By the Wounded Heart, what fine words! Why should I sing for you, if I have no wish to do so? Why, the richest man in all the land—saving the presence of Count Garin—would not dare to drive my sheep and oxen and cows from out his wheatfield or his pasture, for fear of losing his eyes. Wherefore, then, should I sing for you, if I have no wish to do so? "

" God keep you, fair children; yet you will do this thing for me. Take these ten sous that I have here in my purse."

"Sire, we will take the money; but I will not sing for you, since I have sworn not to do so; but I will tell it in plain prose, if such be your pleasure."

"As God pleases," answered Aucassin; "better the tale in prose than no story at all."

"Sire, we were in this glade between six and nine of the morn, and were breaking our bread by the well, just as we are doing now, when a girl came by, the loveliest thing in all the world, so fair that we doubted her a fay, and she brimmed our wood with light. She gave us money, and made a bargain with us that if you came here we would tell you that you must hunt in this forest, for in it is such a quarry that if you may take her you would not part with one of her members for five hundred silver marks, nor for aught that man can give. For in the quest is so sweet a salve that if you take her you shall be cured of your wound; and within three days must the chace be taken, for if she be not found by then, never will you see her more. Now go to your hunting if you will, and if you will not, let it go, for truly have I carried out my bargain with her."

"Fair children," cried Aucassin, "enough have you spoken, and may God set me on her track."

Now is sung:

Aucassin's fond heart was moved
When this hidden word he proved
Sent him by the maid he loved.
Straight his charger he bestrode,
Bade farewell, and swiftly rode
Deep within the forest dim,
Saying o'er and o'er to him:
"Nicolette, so sweet, so good,
'Tis for you I search this wood;
Antlered stag nor boar I chase,
Hot I follow on your trace.
Slender shape and deep, blue eyes,
Dainty laughter, low replies,
Fledge the arrow in my heart.
Ah, to find you, ne'er to part!
Pray God give so fair an end,
Sister, sweet friend."

Now they say and tell and relate:

Aucassin rode through the wood in search of Nicolette, and the charger went right speedily. Do not think that the spines and thorns were pitiful to him. Truly it was not so; for his raiment was so torn that the least tattered of his garments could scarcely hold to his body, and the blood ran from his arms and legs and flanks in forty places, or at least in thirty, so that you could have followed after him by the blood which he left upon the grass. But he thought so fondly of Nicolette, his sweet friend, that he felt neither ill nor dolour. Thus all day long he searched the forest in this fashion, but might learn no news of her, and when it drew towards dusk he commenced to weep because he had heard nothing. He rode at adventure down an old grass-grown road, and looking before him saw a young man standing, such as I will tell you. Tall he was, and marvellously ugly and hideous. His head was big and blacker than smoked meat; the palm of your hand could easily have gone between his two eyes; he had very large cheeks and a monstrous flat nose with great nostrils; lips redder than uncooked flesh; teeth yellow and foul; he was shod with shoes and gaiters of bull's hide, bound about the leg with ropes to well above the knee; upon his back was a rough cloak; and he stood leaning on a huge club. Aucassin urged his steed towards him, but was all afeared when he saw him as he was.

"Fair brother, God keep you."

"God bless you too," said he.

"As God keeps you, what do you here?"

"What is that to you?" said he.

"Truly, naught," answered Aucassin. "I asked with no wish to do you wrong."

"And you, for what cause do you weep?" asked the other, "and make such heavy sorrow? Certainly, were I so rich a man as you are, not the whole world should make me shed a tear."

"Do you know me, then?" said Aucassin.

"Yes, well I know you to be Aucassin, the son of the Count, and if you will tell me why you weep, well, then I will tell you what I do here."

"Certes," said Aucassin, "I will tell you with all my heart. I came this morning to hunt in the forest, and with me a white greyhound, the swiftest in the whole world. I have lost him, and that is why I weep."

"Hear him," cried he, "by the Sacred Heart, and you make all this lamentation for a filthy dog! Sorrow be his who shall esteem you more. Why, there is not a man of substance in these parts who would not give you ten or fifteen or twenty hounds—if so your father wished—and be right glad to make you the gift. But for my part I have full reason to weep and cry aloud."

"And what is your grief, brother?"

"Sire, I will tell you. I was hired by a rich farmer to drive his plough, with a yoke of four oxen. Now three days ago, by great mischance, I lost the best of my bullocks, Roget, the very best ox in the plough. I have been looking for him ever since, and have neither eaten nor drunk for three days, since I dare not go back to the town, because men would put me into prison, as I have no money to pay for my loss. Of all the riches of the world I have nought but the rags upon my back. My poor old mother, too, who had nothing but one worn-out mattress, why, they have taken that from under her, and left her lying on the naked straw. That hurts me more than my own trouble. For money comes and money goes; if I have lost to-day, why, I may win to-morrow; and I will pay for my ox when pay I can. Not for this will I wring my hands. And you—you weep aloud for a filthy cur. Sorrow take him who shall esteem you more."

"Certes, thou art a true comforter, fair brother, and blessed may you be What is the worth of your bullock?"

"Sire, the villein demands twenty sous for his ox. I cannot beat the price down by a single farthing."

"Hold out your hand," said Aucassin; "take these twenty sous which I have in my purse, and pay for your ox."

"Sire," answered the hind, "many thanks, and God grant you find that for which you seek."

So they parted from each other, and Aucassin rode upon his way. The night was beautiful and still, and so he fared along the forest path until he came to the seven cross-roads where Nicolette had builded her bower. Very pretty it was, and very dainty, and well furnished both outside and in, ceiling and floor, with arras and carpet of freshly plucked flowers; no sweeter habitation could man desire to see. When Aucassin came upon it he reined back his horse sharply, and the moonbeams fell within the lodge.

"Dear God," cried Aucassin, "here was Nicolette, my sweet friend, and this has she builded with her fair white hands. For the sweetness of the house and for love of her, now will I dismount, and here will I refresh me this night."

He withdrew his foot from the stirrup, and the charger was tall and high. He dreamed so deeply on Nicolette, his very sweet friend, that he fell heavily upon a great stone, and his shoulder came from its socket. He knew himself to be grievously wounded, but he forced him to do all that he was able, and fastened his horse with the other hand to a thorn. Then he turned on his side, and crawled as best he might into the lodge. Looking through a crevice of the bower he saw the stars shining in the sky, and one brighter than all the others, so he began to repeat—

Now is sung:

Little Star I gaze upon
Sweetly drawing to the moon,
In such golden haunt is set
Love, and bright-haired Nicolette.
God hath taken from our war
Beauty, like a shining star.
Ah, to reach her, though I fell
From her Heaven to my Hell.

Who were worthy such a thing,
Were he emperor or king?
Still you shine, oh, perfect Star,
Beyond, afar.

Now they say and tell and relate:

When Nicolette heard Aucassin speak these words she hastened to him from where she was hidden near by. She entered in the bower, and clasping her arms about his neck, kissed and embraced him straitly.

"Fair sweet friend, very glad am I to find you."

"And you, fair sweet friend, glad am I to meet."

So they kissed, and held each other fast, and their joy was lovely to see.

"Ah, sweet friend," cried Aucassin, "it was but now that I was in grievous pain with my shoulder, but since I hold you close I feel neither sorrow nor wound."

Nicolette searched his hurt, and perceived that the shoulder was out of joint. She handled it so deftly with her white hands, and used such skilful surgery, that by the grace of God (who loveth all true lovers) the shoulder came back to its place. Then she plucked flowers, and fresh grass and green leafage, and bound them tightly about the setting with the hem torn from her shift, and he was altogether healed.

"Aucassin," said she, "fair sweet friend, let us take thought together as to what must be done. If your father beats the wood to-morrow, and men take me, whatever may chance to you, certainly I shall be slain."

"Certes, fair sweet friend, the sorer grief would be mine. But so I may help, never shall you come to his hands."

So he mounted to horse, and setting his love before him, held her fast in his arms, kissing her as he rode, and thus they came forth to the open fields.

Now is sung:

Aucassin, that loving squire,
Dainty fair to heart's desire,
Rode from out the forest dim
Clasping her he loved to him.

'Laced upon the saddle bow
There he kissed her, chin and brow,
There embraced her, mouth and eyes.
But she spake him, sweetly wise;
"Love, a term to dalliance,
Since for us no home in France
Seek we Rome or far Byzance?"
"Sweet my love, all's one to me,
Dale or woodland, earth or sea;
Nothing care I where we ride
So I hold you at my side."
So, enlaced, the lovers went,
Skirting town and battlement,
Rocky scaur, and quiet lawn;
Till one morning, with the dawn,
Broke the cliffs down to the shore,
Loud they heard the surges roar,
Stood by the sea.

Now they say and tell and relate:

Aucassin dismounted upon the sand, he and Nicolette together, as you have heard tell. He took his horse by the bridle, and his damsel by the hand, and walked along the beach. Soon they perceived a ship, belonging to merchants of those parts, sailing close by, so Aucassin made signs to the sailors, and presently they came to him. For a certain price they agreed to take them upon the ship, but when they had reached the open sea a great and marvellous storm broke upon the vessel, and drove them from land to land until they drew to a far-off country, and cast anchor in the port of the castle of Torelore. Then they asked to what realm they had fared, and men told them that it was the fief of the King of Torelore. Then inquired Aucassin what manner of man was this king, and whether there was any war, and men answered—

"Yes, a mighty war."

So Aucassin bade farewell to the merchants, and they commended him to God. He belted his sword about him, climbed to horse, taking his love before him on the saddle bow, and went his way till he came to the castle. He asked where the King might be found, and was told that he was in child-bed.

"Where, then, is his wife?"

And they answered that she was with the host, and had carried with her all the armed men of those parts. When Aucassin heard these things he marvelled very greatly. He came to the palace door and there dismounted, bidding Nicolette to hold the bridle. Then, making his sword ready, he climbed the palace stair, and searched until he came to the chamber where the King lay.

Now is sung:

Hot from searching, Aucassin
Found the room and entered in;
There before the couch he stayed
Where the King, alone, was laid,
Marked the King, and marked the bed,
Marked this lying-in, then said,
"Fool, why doest thou this thing?"
"I'm a mother," quoth the King:
"When my month is gone at length,
And I come to health and strength,
Then shall I hear Mass once more
As my fathers did before,
Arm me lightly, take my lance,
Set my foe a right fair dance,
Where horses prance."

Now they say and tell and relate:

When Aucassin heard the King speak thus he took the linen from the bed, and flung it about the chamber. He saw a staff in the corner, so he seized it, returned to the bed, and beat the King so rudely therewith, that he was near to die.

"Ha, fair sire," cried the King, "what do you require of me? Are you mad that you treat me thus in my own house?"

"By the Sacred Heart," said Aucassin, "bad son of a shameless mother, I will strike with the sword if you do not swear to me that man shall never lie in child-bed in your realm again."

He plighted troth, and when he was thus pledged, "Sire," required Aucassin, "bring me now where your wife is with the host."

"Sire, willingly," said the King.

He got to horse, and Aucassin mounted his, leaving Nicolette at peace in the Queen's chamber. The King and Aucassin rode at adventure until they came to where the Queen was set, and they found that the battle was joined with roasted crab-apples and eggs and fresh cheeses. So Aucassin gazed upon the sight and marvelled greatly.

Now is sung:

Aucassin hath drawn his rein,
From the saddle stared amain,
Marked the set and stricken field,
Cheered the hearts that would not yield.
They had carried to the fight
Mushrooms, apples baked aright,
And for arrows, if you please,
Pelted each with good fresh cheese.
He who muddied most the ford
Bore the prize in that award.
Aucassin, the brave, the true,
Watched these deeds of derring do,
Laughed loudly too.

Now they say and tell and relate:

When Aucassin saw this strange sight he went to the King and asked of him—

"Sire, are these your foes?"

"Yea, sire," answered the King.

"And would you that I should avenge you on them?"

"Yea," answered he, "right willingly."

So Aucassin took sword in hand, and throwing himself in the *mêlée*, struck fiercely on the right and on the left, and slew many. When the King saw the death that Aucassin dealt he snatched at his bridle and cried—

"Hold, fair sire, deal not with them so cruelly."

"What," said Aucassin, "was it not your wish that I should avenge you on your enemies?"

"Sire," replied the King, "too ready is such payment as yours. It is not our custom, nor theirs, to fight a quarrel to the death."

Thereon the foemen fled the field.

The King and Aucassin returned in triumph to the castle of Torelore, and the men of the country persuaded the King that he should cast Aucassin forth from the realm, and give Nicolette to his son, for she seemed a fair woman of high lineage. When Nicolette heard thereof she had little comfort, so began to say—

Now is sung:

Simple folk, and simple King,
Deeming maid so slight a thing.
When my lover finds me sweet,
Sweetly shapen, brow to feet,
Then know I such dalliance,
No delight of harp, or dance,
Sweetest tune, or fairest mirth,
All the play of all the earth
Seems aught of worth.

Now they say and tell and relate:

Aucassin abode in the castle of Torelore in ease and great delight, having with him Nicolette his sweet friend, whom he loved so well. Whilst his days passed in so easy and delightful a manner a great company of Saracens came in galleys oversea and beset the castle, and presently took it by storm. They gathered together the spoil, and bore off the townsfolk, both men and women, into captivity. Amongst these were seized Nicolette and Aucassin, and having bound Aucassin, both hands and feet, they flung him into one vessel, and bestowed Nicolette upon another. Thereafter a great tempest arose at sea, and drove these galleys apart. The ship whereon Aucassin lay bound, drifted idly, here and there, on wind and tide, till by chance she went ashore near by the castle of Beaucaire, and the men of that part hurrying to the wreck, found Aucassin, and knew him again. When the men of Beaucaire saw their lord they had much joy, for Aucassin had lived at the castle of Torelore in all ease for three full years, and his father and his mother were dead. They brought him to the castle of Beaucaire, and knelt before him; so held he his realm in peace.

Now is sung:

Aucassin hath gained Beaucaire,
Men have done him homage there;
Holds he now in peace his fief,
Castellan and count and chief.
Yet with heaviness and grief
Goeth he in that fair place,
Lacking love and one sweet face;
Grieving more for one bright head
Than he mourneth for his dead.
"Dearest love, and lady kind,
Treasure I may never find,
God hath never made that strand
Far o'er sea or long by land,
Where I would not seek such prize
And merchandize."

Now they say and tell and relate:

Now leave we Aucassin and let us tell of Nicolette. The ship which carried Nicolette belonged to the King of Carthage, and he was her father, and she had twelve brothers, all princes or kings in the land. When they saw the beauty of the girl, they made much of her, and bore her in great reverence, and questioned her straitly as to her degree, for certainly she seemed to them a very gracious lady and of high lineage. But she could not tell them aught thereof, for she was but a little child when men sold her into captivity. So the oarsmen rowed until the galley cast anchor beneath the city of Carthage, and when Nicolette gazed on the battlements and the country round about, she called to mind that there had she been cherished, and from thence borne away when but an unripe maid; yet she was not snatched away so young but that she could clearly remember that she was the daughter of the King of Carthage, and once was nourished in the city.

Now is sung:

Nicolette, that maid demure,
Set her foot on alien shore;
Marked the city fenced with walls,
Gazed on palaces and halls.

Then she sighed, " Ah, little worth
All the pomp of all the earth,
Since the daughter of a king,
Come of Sultan's blood, they bring
Stripped to market, as a slave.
Aucassin, true heart and brave,
Sweet thy love upon me steals,
Urges, clamours, pleads, appeals;
Would to God that peril past
In my arms I held you fast;
Would to God that in this place
We were stayed in one embrace,
Fell your kisses on my face,
My dear, my fere."

Now they say and tell and relate:

When the King of Carthage heard Nicolette speak in this wise he put his arms about her neck.

" Fair sweet friend," said he, " tell me truly who you are, and be not esmayed of me."

" Sire," answered she, " truly am I daughter to the King of Carthage, and was stolen away when but a little child, full fifteen years ago."

When they heard her say this thing they were assured that her words were true, so they rejoiced greatly, and brought her to the palace in such pomp as became the daughter of a king. They sought to give her some king of those parts as husband and baron, but she had no care to marry. She stayed in the palace three or four days, and considered in her mind by what means she might flee and seek Aucassin. So she obtained a viol, and learned to play thereon; and when on a certain day they would have given her in marriage to a rich king among the Paynim, she rose at night and stole away secretly, wandering until she came to the seaport, where she lodged with some poor woman in a house near the shore. There, by means of a herb, she stained her head and face, so that her fairness was all dark and discoloured; and having made herself coat and mantle, shirt and hose, she equipped her in the guise of a minstrel. Then, taking her viol, she sought out a sailor, and persuaded him sweetly

to grant her a passage in his ship. They hoisted sail, and voyaged over the rough seas until they came to the land of Provence; and Nicolette set foot on shore, carrying her viol, and fared playing through the country, until she came to the castle of Beaucaire, in the very place where Aucassin was.

Now is sung:

'Neath the keep of strong Beaucaire
On a day of summer fair,
At his pleasure, Aucassin
Sat with baron, friend and kin.
Then upon the scent of flow'rs,
Song of birds, and golden hours,
Full of beauty, love, regret,
Stole the dream of Nicolette,
Came the tenderness of years;
So he drew apart in tears.
Then there entered to his eyes
Nicolette, in minstrel guise,
Touched the viol with the bow,
Sang as I will let you know.
"Lords and ladies, list to me,
High and low, of what degree;
Now I sing, for your delight,
Aucassin, that loyal knight,
And his fond friend, Nicolette.
Such the love betwixt them set
When his kinsfolk sought her head
Fast he followed where she fled.
From their refuge in the keep
Paynims bore them o'er the deep.
Nought of him I know to end.
But for Nicolette, his friend,
Dear she is, desirable,
For her father loves her well;
Famous Carthage owns him king,
Where she has sweet cherishing.
Now, as lord he seeks for her,
Sultan, Caliph, proud Emir.
But the maid of these will none,
For she loves a dansellon,
Aucassin, who plighted troth.
Sworn has she some pretty oath
Ne'er shall she be wife or bride,
Never lie at baron's side
Be he denied."

Now they say and tell and relate:

When Aucassin heard Nicolette sing in this fashion he was glad at heart, so he drew her aside, and asked—

"Fair sweet friend," said Aucassin, "know you naught of this Nicolette, whose ballad you have sung?"

"Sire, truly, yes; well I know her for the most loyal of creatures, and as the most winning and modest of maidens born. She is daughter to the King of Carthage, who took her when Aucassin also was taken, and brought her to the city of Carthage, till he knew for certain that she was his child, whereat he rejoiced greatly. Any day he would give her for husband one of the highest kings in all Spain; but rather would she be hanged or burned than take him, however rich he be."

"Ah, fair sweet friend," cried the Count Aucassin, "if you would return to that country and persuade her to have speech with me here, I would give you of my riches more than you would dare to ask of me or to take. Know that for love of her I choose not to have a wife, however proud her race, but I stand and wait; for never will there be wife of mine if it be not her, and if I knew where to find her I should not need to grope blindly for her thus."

"Sire," answered she, "if you will do these things I will go and seek her for your sake, and for hers too; because to me she is very dear."

He pledged his word, and caused her to be given twenty pounds. So she bade him farewell, and he was weeping for the sweetness of Nicolette. And when she saw his tears—

"Sire," said she, "take it not so much to heart; in so short a space will I bring her to this town, and you shall see her with your eyes."

When Aucassin knew this he rejoiced greatly. So she parted from him, and fared in the town to the house of the Viscountess, for the Viscount, her god-father, was dead. There she lodged, and opened her mind fully to the lady on all the business; and the Viscountess recalled the past, and

knew well that it was Nicolette whom she had cherished. So she caused the bath to be heated, and made her take her ease for fully eight days. Then Nicolette sought a herb that was called celandine, and washed herself therewith, and became so fair as she had never been before. She arrayed her in a rich silken gown from the lady's goodly store; and seated herself in the chamber on a rich stuff of broidered sendal; then she whispered the dame, and begged her to fetch Aucassin, her friend. This she did. When she reached the palace, lo, Aucassin in tears, making great sorrow for the long tarrying of Nicolette, his friend; and the lady called to him, and said—

"Aucassin, behave not so wildly; but come with me, and I will show you that thing you love best in all the world; for Nicolette, your sweet friend, is here from a far country to seek her love."

So Aucassin was glad at heart.

Now is sung:

When he learned that in Beaucaire
Lodged his lady, sweet and fair,
Aucassin arose, and came
To her hostel, with the dame;
Entered in, and passed straightway
To the chamber where she lay.
When she saw him, Nicolette
Had such joy as never yet;
Sprang she lightly to her feet
Swiftly came with welcome meet.
When he saw her, Aucassin
Oped both arms, and drew her in,
Clasped her close in fond embrace,
Kissed her eyes and kissed her face.
In such greeting sped the night,
Till, at dawning of the light,
Aucassin, with pomp most rare,
Crowned her Countess of Beaucaire.
Such delight these lovers met,
Aucassin and Nicolette.
Length of days and joy did win,
Nicolette and Aucassin,
Endeth song and tale I tell
With marriage bell.

MARGUERITE D'ANGOULÊME, QUEEN OF NAVARRE

(1493–1549)

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(I)

INGENIOUS DEVICE OF A CASTILIAN IN ORDER TO MAKE A DECLARATION OF LOVE TO A QUEEN, AND WHAT CAME OF IT

THERE was at the court of a king and queen of Castile, whose names history does not mention, a gentleman of such good birth and comely person, that his equal there was not in all Spain. Everyone held his endowments in admiration, but still more his eccentricity; for it had never been perceived that he loved or courted any lady, though there were many at the court who might have fired ice itself; but there was not one who could kindle the heart of Elisor, for so this gentleman was named. The queen, who was a woman of great virtue, but a woman nevertheless, and not more exempt than the rest of her sex from that flame which is the more violent the more it is compressed—the queen, I say, surprised that this gentleman did not attach himself to any of her ladies, asked him one day if it was true that he was as indifferent as he appeared. He replied, that if she saw his heart as she saw his face, she would not have asked him that question. Eager to know what he meant, she pressed him so hard, that he confessed he loved a lady whom he believed to be the most virtuous in all Christendom. She did all she could by entreaties and commands to make him say who the lady was, but all to no purpose; till at last she pretended to be deeply incensed against him and swore

that she would never speak to him again if he did not name the lady he loved so passionately. To escape from her importunities, he was forced to say that he would rather die than do what she required of him; but at last finding that he was about to be deprived of the honour of seeing her, and to be cast out of her favour for not declaring a truth in itself so seemly that no one could take it in bad part, he said to her, trembling with emotion, "I cannot and dare not, madam, name the person; but I will show her to you the first time we go to the chase; and I am sure that you will say as well as I, that she is the most beautiful and most accomplished lady in the world."

After this reply, the queen went to the chase sooner than she would otherwise have done. Elisor had notice of this, and prepared to wait on her Majesty as usual. He had got made for himself a great steel mirror in the shape of a corslet, and this he placed on his chest, concealed beneath a mantle of black frieze, all bordered with pearl and gold. He rode a black horse, very richly caparisoned. His harness was all gilded and enamelled in the Moorish fashion, and his black silk hat had a buckle adorned with precious stones, and having in the centre, for a device, a Love concealed by Force. His sword, poniard, and the devices upon them corresponded to the rest; in short, he was admirably accoutred; and he was such a good horseman, that all who saw him neglected the pleasures of the chase to see the paces and leaps which Elisor made his horse perform. After escorting the queen to the place where the toils were spread, he alighted and went to aid her Majesty to dismount. At the moment she held out her arms, he opened his cloak, which covered his new cuirass, and said, "Be pleased, madam, to look here," and without awaiting her reply he set her gently on the ground.

When the chase was ended, the queen returned to the palace without speaking to Elisor. After supper she called him to her, and told him he was the greatest liar she had

ever seen, for he had promised to show her at the chase the lady of his love, and yet he had done no such thing; but for her part, she was resolved for the future to make no account of him. Elisor fearing that the queen had not understood what he had said to her, replied that he had kept his word, and that he had shown her not only the woman, but also that thing in all the world which he loved best. Affecting ignorance of his meaning, she declared she was not aware that he had shown her any of her ladies. "That is true," replied Elisor; "but what did I show you when you dismounted from your horse?"

"Nothing," said the queen, "but a mirror you had on your chest."

"And what did you see in the mirror?"

"Nothing but myself."

"Consequently, madam, I have kept my word and obeyed you. Never did anything enter my heart but that which you saw when you looked at my chest. She who was there pictured is the only one whom I love, revere, and adore, not as a woman merely, but as an earthly divinity, on whom my life and death depend. The only favour I ask of you, madam, is, that the perfect passion, which has been life to me whilst concealed, may not be my death now that I have declared it. If I am worthy that you should regard me and receive me as your most impassioned servant, suffer me at least to live, as I have hitherto done, upon the blissful consciousness that I have dared to give my heart to a being so perfect and so worthy of all honour that I must be content to love her though I can never hope to be loved in return. If the knowledge you now possess of my intense love does not render me more agreeable to your eyes than heretofore, at least do not deprive me of life, which for me consists in the bliss of seeing you as usual. I now receive from you no other favour than that which is absolutely necessary for my existence. If I have less you will have a servant the less, and will lose the best and

most affectionate one you have ever had or ever will have."

The queen, whether it was that she might appear other than she really was, or that she might put his love for her to a longer proof, or that she loved another whom she could not forsake for him, or, lastly, that she was glad to have this lover in reserve in case her heart should become vacant through any fault which might be committed by him whom she loved already, said to him in a tone which expressed neither anger nor satisfaction, "I will not ask you, Elisor, although I know not the power of love, how you can have been so presumptuous and so extravagant as to love me; for I know the heart of man is so little at his own command, that one cannot love or hate as one chooses. But since you have so well concealed your feelings, I desire to know how long you have entertained them?"

Elisor, looking in her beautiful face, and hearing her inquire about his malady, was not without hopes that she would afford him some relief, but, on the other hand, seeing the self-command and the gravity with which she questioned him, he feared he had to do with a judge who was about to pronounce sentence against him. Notwithstanding this fluctuation between hope and fear, he protested that he had loved her since her early youth; but that it was only with the last seven years he had been conscious of his pain, or rather of a malady so agreeable that he would rather die than be cured.

"Since you have been constant for seven years," said the queen, "I must be no more precipitate in believing you than you have been in declaring your love to me. Therefore, if you speak the truth, I wish to convince myself of it in a manner that shall leave no room for doubt; and if I am satisfied with the result of the trial, I will believe you to be towards me such as you swear that you are; and then, when I find you to be indeed what you say, you shall find me to be what you wish."

Elisor besought her to put him to any proof she pleased, there being nothing so hard that would not appear to him very easy, in the hope that he might be happy enough to convince her of the perfect love he bore her. He only waited, he said, to be honoured with her commands.

"If you love me, Elisor, as much as you say," replied the queen, "I am sure that nothing will seem hard to you to obtain my good graces, so I command you, by the desire you have of possessing them, and the fear of losing them, that to-morrow, without seeing me more, you quit the court and go to a place where for seven years you shall hear nothing of me, nor I of you. You know well that you love me since you have had seven years' experience of the fact. When I shall have a similar seven years' experience, I shall believe what all your protestations would fail to assure me of."

This cruel command made Elisor believe at first that her intention was to get rid of him; but, upon second thoughts, he accepted the condition, hoping that the proof would do more for him than all the words he could utter. "If I have lived seven years without hope," he said, "under the painful necessity of dissembling my love, now that it is known to you, and that I have some gleam of hope, I shall pass the other seven years with patience and calmness. But, madam, since in obeying the command you impose upon me, I am deprived of all the joy I have ever had in the world, what hope do you give me that at the end of seven years you will own me for your faithful servant?"

Drawing a ring off her finger, "Let us cut this ring in two," said the queen; "I will keep one half and you the other, in order that I may recognize you by that token in case length of time makes me forget your face."

Elisor took the ring, divided it in two, gave the queen one half, and kept the other. Then, taking leave of her, more dead than those who have already given up the ghost, he went home to give orders for his departure. Sending his

whole retinue to the country, he went away with only one attendant to a place so lonely and sequestered, that none of his relations and friends had any tidings of him for seven years. How he lived during that time and what sorrow absence made him endure are things beyond my telling; but those who love can be at no loss to conceive them.

Precisely at the end of seven years, and at the moment when the queen was going to Mass, a hermit with a long beard came to her, kissed her hand, and presented to her a petition, which she did not peruse at once, though her custom was to receive all the petitions that were presented to her, however poor were the people who preferred them. When Mass was half said, she opened the petition and found enclosed in it the half of the ring she had given to Elisor. This was an agreeable surprise for her, and before she read the paper she ordered her almoner to bring her straightway the hermit who had presented the petition. The almoner sought for him in all directions, but all he could learn was, that he had been seen to mount and ride away; but no one could tell which way he had gone. While awaiting the return of the almoner, the queen read the petition, which turned out to be a letter composed in the best possible manner, and but for the desire I feel to make it intelligible to you, I should never have ventured to translate it; for I must beg you to understand that the Castilian is better adapted than the French tongue to express the emotions of love. The letter was as follows:

"Time, a mighty teacher, gave me perfectly to know the nature of love. Time was afterwards assigned to me, that the incredulous one might see by my protracted woe what love could not convince her of. Time hath shown me on what foundation my heart built its love. That foundation was your beauty, which concealed great cruelty. Time teaches me that beauty is nothing, and that cruelty is the cause of my weal. Exiled by the beauty whose regards I so yearned for, I have come to be more conscious of your

extreme unkindness. I obey your cruel order, however, and am perfectly willing to do so; for time has had such pity on me that I have wished to return to this place to bid you, not a good day, but a last farewell. Time has shown me love just as it is, poor and naked; and I have no sense of it except regret. But time has likewise shown me true love, which I have known only in that solitude where for seven years I have been doomed to mourn in silence. Through time I have come to know the love that dwells on high, at sight of which the other love vanishes, and I have given myself wholly to the one, and weaned my affections from the other. To that better love I devote my heart and my body to do suit and service to it and not to you. When I served you, you esteemed me nothing. I now give you back entirely the love you put into my heart, having no need either of it or of you. I take my leave of cruelty, pain, torment, scorn, hatred, and the burning fire with which you are filled, no less than you are adorned with beauty. I cannot better bid farewell to all woes and pains and intolerable distresses, and to the hell of the amorous woman, than in bidding farewell to you, madam, without the least prospect that wherever you or I may be we shall ever look upon each other more."

The letter was not read without tears and incredible surprise and regret. Indeed, the queen could not but feel so keenly the loss of a servant who loved her so perfectly, that not all her treasures, nor even her crown, could hinder her from being the poorest and most miserable princess in the world, since she had lost that which no wealth could replace. After hearing Mass, she returned to her chamber, where she gave utterance to the lamentations her cruelty had merited. There was no mountain, rock, or forest to which she did not send in quest of the hermit, but he who had taken him out of her hands hindered him from falling into them again, and removed him to Paradise before she could discover his retreat in this world.

(II)

TWO OVER-INQUISITIVE CORDELIERS HAD A GREAT FRIGHT, WHICH HAD LIKE TO COST THEM THEIR LIVES

BETWEEN Niort and Fors there is a village named Grip, which belongs to the Lord of Fors. Two Cordeliers of Niort arrived late one night at this village, and took up their quarters with a butcher. As their bedroom was separated from their host's only by an ill-jointed boarded partition, they had a mind to listen to what passed between the husband and wife, and they clapped their ears to the partition close to the head of the host's bed. As the butcher had no suspicion of his guests, he talked to his wife about his business, and said, "My dear, I must be up betimes to-morrow, and see about our Cordeliers. One of them is very fat; we will kill him and salt him forthwith, and we shall make a good thing of him."

Though the butcher talked of his pigs, which he called Cordeliers, the two poor friars, hearing this, set it all down to their own account and awaited daylight with great terror. One of them was very fat, the other very lean; and the fat one set about confessing himself to his companion, alleging that a butcher, having lost the love and fear of God, would make no more of slaughtering them than an ox or any other beast. As they were shut up in their chamber, from which there was no issue but through the host's, they gave themselves up for dead men, and earnestly commended their souls to God. The young man, who was not so overcome by fear as the elder, said to him, that since they could not get out at the door, they must try to escape through the window; at the worst they could only be killed in the attempt, and death one way or the other was the same thing in the end. The fat friar consented to the expedient.

The young one opened the window, and, as it was not very high, dropped lightly to the ground, and ran away as fast as he could, without waiting for his companion, who was not so lucky, for, being very bulky, he fell so heavily that he hurt one leg severely, and was unable to rise from the ground. Deserted by his companion and unable to follow him, he looked about for some place where he might hide, and saw nothing but a pigsty, into which he dragged himself the best way he could. When he opened the door, two big porkers which were inside rushed out and left the place free to the Cordelier, who shut himself in, hoping that he might hear people passing by, to whom he would call and obtain help.

As soon as daylight appeared the butcher got ready his big knives, and told his wife to come and help him to kill the two pigs. Going to the sty, he opened the little door, and cried out, "Come, turn out here, my Cordelier. I'll have your chitterlings for my dinner to-day." The Cordelier, who could not stand on his leg, crawled out on his hands and knees roaring for mercy. If he was in a great fright, the butcher and his wife were no less so. The first idea that came into their heads was that St. Francis was angry with them because they had called pigs Cordeliers; and under that notion they fell on their knees before the poor friar, begging pardon of St. Francis and his order. On the one side was the Cordelier bawling for mercy to the butcher, on the other side, the butcher making the same appeal to the Cordelier. At last the Cordelier, finding that the butcher had no intention of hurting him, told him why he had hid in that place. Fear then gave way to laughter, except on the part of the poor friar, whose leg pained him so that he had no inclination to laugh. The butcher, to console him in some degree, took him back to the house and had his hurts carefully attended to. As for his companion, who had forsaken him in distress, he ran all night, and arrived in the morning at the house of the Lord of

Fors, where he made loud complaints of the butcher, who, he supposed, had by that time killed his companion, since the latter had not followed him. The Lord of Fors sent immediately to Grip to see how matters stood, and his messengers brought back matter for laughter, which he failed not to communicate to his mistress, the Duchess d'Angoulême, mother of Francis I.

(III)

THE HORRIBLE INCONTINENCE AND MALICE OF A DUCHESS OF BURGUNDY WAS THE CAUSE OF HER DEATH AND OF THAT OF TWO PERSONS WHO FONDLY LOVED EACH OTHER

THERE was in the Duchy of Burgundy a duke who was a very agreeable prince and of very goodly person. He had a wife with whose beauty he was so satisfied that it blinded him to her disposition, and he thought only of pleasing her, while she, on her part, made a show of responding only to his affection. This duke had in his household a young gentleman so accomplished in all that can be desired in a man, that he was loved by everybody, and especially by the duke, about whose person he had been brought up from childhood, and who, knowing him to possess so many perfections, had the warmest regard for him, and trusted him in all affairs suitable to his years. The duchess, who was not a virtuous woman, nor satisfied with her husband's love and the kind treatment she received from him, often cast her eyes on this gentleman, and found him so much to her taste that she loved him beyond measure. She was evermore trying to make this known to him by languishing and tender glances, sighs, and impassioned airs; but the gentleman, who never studied anything but virtue, knew

nought of vice in a lady who had so little excuse for it; so that the glances, sighs, and impassioned airs of the poor wanton brought her nothing but bitter disappointment. She carried her extravagance so far, that, forgetting she was a wife who ought, though solicited, to grant no favour, and a princess who was made to be adored, yet to disdain such servants, she resolved to act like a man transported with passion, and to discharge her bosom of a burden that was insupportable.

One day then, when the duke went to council, to which the gentleman was not admitted, being too young, she beckoned to him, and he came, thinking she had some order to give him. Leaning then on his arm, like a woman wearied by too much repose, she walked about with him in a gallery, and said, "I am surprised that, being as you are, young, handsome, and full of engaging qualities, you have been able hitherto to live in continual intercourse with so many fair ladies without loving any of them." And then with one of her most gracious looks, she paused for his answer.

"Madam," he replied, "if I were worthy that your greatness should descend to think of me, you would have more reason for surprise, to see so insignificant a man as I am offer his services only to meet with refusal or mockery."

Upon this discreet reply the duchess loved him more than ever, and vowed that there was not a lady in the court but would be too happy to have a lover of his merit; that he might try, and that she assured him he would succeed without difficulty. The gentleman kept his eye constantly on the ground, not daring to look on the countenance of the duchess, which glowed enough to warm an icicle. Just when he was about to excuse himself, the duke sent for the duchess to come to the council upon an affair in which she was interested. She went with much regret. As for the gentleman, he pretended not to have understood what she said, which vexed and confused her so much that she knew not what to impute it to but the silly fear with which she

thought the young man possessed. Seeing, then, that he did not understand her language, she resolved a few days afterwards to overleap fear and shame, and declare her passion to him in plain terms, never doubting but that beauty like hers could not fail to be well received. Nevertheless, she would have been glad to have had the honour to be solicited; but, after all, she preferred pleasure to honour.

After having several times again tried the same means she had first essayed, and always with the same unwelcome result, she plucked him by the sleeve one day, and told him she wanted to speak to him on an affair of importance. With all due respect and humility the gentleman followed her to a window recess, where, finding that she could not be seen from the chamber, she resumed the subject of her past conversation with a trembling voice, indicative alike of desire and fear. She reproached him for not having yet made choice of a lady, and assured him that wherever he fixed his affections she would spare no pains to ensure his success. The gentleman, not less distressed than astonished at such language, replied, "My heart is so tender, madam, that if I were once refused I should never know joy; and I am so well aware of my slender merit, that I am sure there is no lady in the court who would accept my services."

The duchess blushed at these words, imagining that his heart was lost, protested he had only to wish, and she would answer for it that she knew the fairest lady in the court who would receive him with extreme joy, and make him consummately happy. "I do not believe, madam," he replied, "that there is any woman in this court so unfortunate and so infatuated as to have made me the object of her predilections."

Seeing that he would not understand her, she proceeded to give him a more direct glimpse of her passion; and as the gentleman's virtue gave her cause for fear, she spoke by way of interrogation. "If fortune," she said, "had so favoured

you that it was myself who was thus well inclined to you, what would you say?"

The gentleman, who thought he was dreaming to hear her speak thus, dropped on one knee on the ground and replied, "When God shall do me the grace, madam, to make me possessor of the good-will of the duke my master, and of yourself, I shall deem myself the happiest of men. It is the sole recompense I crave for my faithful services, bound as I am above all others to sacrifice my life for you both. I am convinced, madam, that the love you have for my lord your spouse is so pure and great, that not even the greatest prince and the most accomplished man in the world, to say nothing of myself, who am but a worm of the earth, could impair the union that subsists between my master and you. As for me, I would not for my life entertain a thought other than that which becomes a faithful servant as regards either his wife, sister, or mother."

The duchess would not suffer him to proceed, but seeing she was in danger of receiving a shameful refusal, she broke in upon him suddenly, "Wicked and arrogant fool! who requires any such thing of you? Because you are good-looking you imagine that the very flies are enamoured of you; but if you were presumptuous enough to address yourself to me, I would soon let you know that I love, and will love, none but my husband. I have spoken to you as I have done only for my diversion, to sift you, and make you my laughing-stock, as I do all amorous coxcombs."

"I have all along been assured that it was just as you say, madam," replied the gentleman.

She would hear no more, but turned abruptly from him, and to avoid her ladies, who followed her into her chamber, she shut herself up in her closet, where she gave way to an indescribable burst of bitter feeling. On the one hand, the love in which she had failed caused her mortal sadness; and on the other, her despite against herself for entering upon so injudicious a dialogue, and against the gentleman

for having answered so prudently, put her into such a fury that at one moment she wished to kill herself, at the next she would live to be revenged on him she regarded as her deadliest enemy. After a long fit of tears she feigned indisposition, to avoid appearing at the duke's supper, at which the gentleman was usually in attendance. The duke, who loved his wife more than himself, failed not to go and see her; when, in order to arrive the more easily at her ends, she told him she believed she was pregnant, and that her pregnancy had caused a rheum to fall upon her eyes, which gave her great pain. The duchess kept her bed for two or three hours in so sad and melancholy mood that the duke suspected there was something else the matter besides pregnancy. He went to sleep with her that night, but seeing that, in spite of all the caresses he could bestow upon her, she continued to sigh incessantly, he said, "You know, my dear, that I love you as my life, and that if you die I cannot possibly survive you. If, then, you value my health and life, tell me, I entreat, what makes you sigh thus; for I cannot believe that pregnancy alone can produce that effect."

The duchess, seeing her husband in the very mood she wished, hastened to turn it to her vengeful purpose. "Alas! monsieur," said she, embracing him with tears, "my worst suffering is to see you the dupe of those whose duty it is to preserve your honour and all that is yours." This made the duke wondrously eager to know what she meant, and he begged her to speak openly without fear or disguise. "I shall never be surprised," she said at last, after repeated refusals, "if strangers make war on princes, since those who are most bound to them undertake to wage such a horrible war against them, that the loss of domains is nothing in comparison to it. I say this, monsieur, with reference to a gentleman" (here she named her enemy) "whom you have fed, reared, treated more like a relation than a domestic, and who, by way of gratitude, has had the impudence and the baseness to attempt the honour of your wife, on which

depends that of your house and your children. Though he long laboured to insinuate to me things that left me no doubt of his black perfidy, yet my heart, which is only for you, and thinks only on you, could not comprehend him; but at last he explained himself and I replied to him as my rank and my honour required. I hate him, however, so that I cannot bear the sight of him; and this it was, monsieur, which made me keep my room, and lose the happiness of your company. I beseech you, monsieur, not to keep such a pestilence near you, for after such a crime, the fear of your being acquainted with it might very likely induce him to do something worse. You now know, monsieur, the cause of my grief, which seems to me most just and most worthy that you should right it without delay."

The duke, who on the one hand loved his wife and felt himself outraged, and on the other hand loved the gentleman, of whose fidelity he had often had practical proof, could hardly believe that this lie was truth. He withdrew to his chamber in great perplexity and anger, and sent word to the gentleman that he was not to appear any more in his presence, but was to retire to his own home for some time. The gentleman, ignorant of the cause of an order so peremptory and so unexpected, was the more keenly affected by it as he thought he had deserved the very opposite treatment. Conscious of his innocence in heart and deed, he got one of his comrades to speak to the duke on his behalf, and deliver him a letter, wherein he most humbly entreated, that if he had the misfortune to be removed from his master's presence, in consequence of some report to his prejudice, the duke would have the goodness to suspend his judgment until he should have inquired into the truth; and then he durst hope it would be found he had in nowise offended. This letter somewhat appeased the duke; he sent for the gentleman to come secretly to his chamber, and said to him with great gravity, "I could never have believed that after having had you nurtured like

my own child, I should have cause to repent of having so highly advanced you, forasmuch as you have sought to outrage me in a manner that would have been worse to me than the loss of life and fortune, namely, by attempting the honour of her who is the half of myself, and seeking to cover my house with perpetual infamy. You may believe that I felt this insult so deeply, that if I was quite sure that the fact was true, you would by this time be at the bottom of the water, to punish you secretly for the affront you have secretly sought to put upon me."

The gentleman was not dismayed by this speech; on the contrary, he spoke with the confidence of innocence, and besought the duke to have the goodness to tell him who was his accuser, the accusation being one of those which are better discussed with the lance than with the tongue. "Your accuser," replied the duke, "has no other arms than her chastity. It was my wife, and no one else, who told me this, praying me to take vengeance upon you."

Amazed as the poor gentleman was at the prodigious malice of the duchess, he would not accuse her, but contented himself with saying, "My lady may say what she pleases. You know her, monsieur, better than I, and you know if I have seen her elsewhere than in your company, except once only when she spoke to me a very little. Your judgment is as sound as that of any prince in Christendom. Therefore, my liege, I beseech you to consider if you have ever seen anything in me which can have caused you suspicion. It is a fire which it is impossible long to conceal in such wise that those who labour under the same malady shall not have some inkling of it. I beg, my liege, that you will be graciously pleased to believe two things of me: one is, that I am so true to you, that though my lady your spouse were the finest woman in the world, love would not be capable of making me do anything contrary to my honour and my duty; the other is, that even were she not your spouse, she is, of all the women I have ever seen, the one I

should be least inclined to love; and there are enough of others on whom I should sooner fix my choice."

The duke's anger was somewhat mitigated by these words. "Well," said he, "I did not believe it; so you may go on as usual, with the assurance that if I find the truth is on your side, I will love you more than ever; but if the contrary appears, your life is in my hand." The gentleman thanked him, and declared his willingness to submit to the severest penalty his master could devise if he were found guilty.

The duchess, seeing the gentleman continue to serve as usual, could not patiently endure it, and said to her husband, "It would be no more than you deserve, monsieur, if you were poisoned, since you have more confidence in your mortal enemies than in your nearest friends."

"Do not make yourself uneasy, my dear," replied the duke; "for if it appears that what you told me is true, I assure you he has not twenty-four hours to live. But as he has protested the contrary to me on oath, and as, besides, I never perceived anything of the sort, I cannot believe it without proofs."

"Truly, monsieur," she returned, "your goodness makes my malice greater. What greater proof would you have than that a man like him has never had any amour imputed to him? Be assured, monsieur, that but for the vain and presumptuous idea with which he has flattered himself of becoming my servant, he would not be without a mistress at this time of day. Never did a young man live so solitary as he in good company; and the reason can only be that his heart is set so high and his vain hope stands him in stead of everything else. If you believe that he conceals nothing from you, swear him as to his amours. If he tells you that he loves another, why then believe him; I am content you should; but if not, be assured that what I say is true."

The duke approved of his wife's suggestion, and taking the gentleman into the country, said to him, "My wife continues still to speak to me of you to the same purpose, and mentions a circumstance which gives me some suspicion.

To be plain with you, it excites surprise that you, a young and gallant man, have never been known to be in love; and this very thing makes me fear that you entertain the sentiments you have been charged with, and that the hope you cherish is so pleasing to you that you cannot think of any other woman. I pray you then as a friend, and order you as a master, to tell me truly, do you pay your court to any lady in the world?"

The poor gentleman, who would fain have concealed his love as carefully as he would have preserved his life, seeing his master's extreme jealousy, was constrained to swear to him that he loved a lady so beautiful that the beauty of the duchess and of all the ladies of her suite was mean in comparison, not to say ugliness and deformity; at the same time he besought the duke not to insist on his naming the lady, because the intimacy between him and his mistress was such that it could only be broken by whichever of the two first disclosed it. The duke promised he would never press him on that point, and was so satisfied with him, that he behaved more graciously to him than ever. The duchess perceived it, and employed her usual artifices to find out the reason; nor did the duke conceal it from her. Strong jealousy was now added to her thirst of vengeance, and she besought the duke to insist that the gentleman should name his mistress, declaring that if he refused to do so, her husband would be the most credulous prince in the world to put faith in so vague a statement.

The poor prince, who was led by his wife as she pleased, went and walked alone with the gentleman, and told him he was in still greater embarrassment than ever, being afraid that what he had told him was only an excuse to hinder him from coming to the truth, which made him more uneasy than before; therefore he besought him most earnestly to tell him the name of her he loved so much. The poor gentleman implored the duke not to constrain him to break the promise he had given to a person he loved

as his life, and which he had kept inviolate until that moment. It would be tantamount to requiring him to lose in one day what he had preserved for more than seven years, and he would rather die than do that wrong to a person who was so faithful to him. His refusal threw the duke into such a violent fit of jealousy that he exclaimed furiously, "Take your choice: either tell me the name of her you love above all others, or quit my dominions on pain of death if you are found in them after eight days."

If ever faithful servant was smitten with keen anguish it was this poor gentleman, who might well say, *Angustiæ sunt mihi undique.* On the one hand, if he told the truth he lost his mistress, should it come to her knowledge that he had broken his word to her; on the other, if he did not tell it, he was exiled from the country where she resided, and could never see her more. Thus pressed on all sides, a cold sweat broke out upon him, as if his anguish had brought him to the brink of the grave. The duke, perceiving his embarrassment, imagined he loved only the duchess, and that his confusion arose from the fact that he could not name anyone else. In this belief he said to him sternly, "If you had told me the truth, you would have less difficulty in doing what I desire, but I believe that it is your crime that occasions your embarrassment."

The gentleman, stung by these words, and urged by the love he bore his master, resolved to tell him the truth, assuring himself that the duke was a man of so much honour that he would keep his secret inviolate. He fell on his knees then, and said to him, with his hands pressed together, "My liege, the obligations I am under to you, and the love I bear you, constrain me more than the fear of death. You are possessed with so false a prejudice against me that, to undeceive you, I am resolved what no torments could extort from me. The only favour I ask of you, my liege, is that you will swear on the faith of a prince and a Christian, never to reveal the secret which you force from me."

The duke promised him, with all the oaths he could think of, never to tell his secret to anyone, either by word, act, or signs; and the gentleman, relying on the good faith of a prince whom he knew, put the first hand to his own undoing, saying to him, "It is seven years, my lord, since having known your niece, the Lady du Verger, as a widow and disengaged, I tried to acquire her good-will. As I was not of birth to marry her, I contented myself with being received by her as a lover, in which I succeeded. Our intercourse has been conducted hitherto with so much prudence, that no one has come to the knowledge of it except you, my lord, into whose hands I put my life and honour, entreating you to keep the secret, and to have no less esteem for my lady your niece, than whom I do not think there is under heaven a creature more perfect."

The duke was delighted with this declaration, for, knowing the extraordinary beauty of his niece, he doubted not that she was more capable of pleasing than his wife. But not conceiving it possible that such a mystery should have been carried on without adequate means, he begged to know how her lover managed to see her. The gentleman told him that his mistress's chamber opened on a garden, and that on the days when he was to visit her a little gate was left open, through which he entered on foot, and advanced until he heard the barking of a little dog, which the lady let loose in the garden after her women had all retired; that then he went to her, and conversed with her all night, and on his departure appointed the day when he was to come again, which he had never failed to do, except for indispensable reasons. The duke, who was the most curious of men, and who had been very gallant in his time, begged him, as well to dissipate his suspicions as for the pleasure of hearing so singular an adventure recounted, to take him with him, not as a master, but as a companion, the next time he went thither. The gentleman, having gone so far, assented, and told him the assignation was for that very day. The duke

was as glad as if he had won a kingdom, and feigning to retire to his *garderobe* to rest, had two horses brought, one for the gentleman and the other for himself, and they travelled all night from Argilly, where the duke resided, to Le Verger, where they left their horses at the entrance of the park.

The gentleman made the duke enter through the little gate, and begged him to place himself behind a large walnut tree, whence he might see if what he told him was true or not. They had not been long in the garden before the little dog began to bark, and the gentleman walked towards the tower, whilst the lady advanced to meet him. She saluted him with an embrace, and told him it seemed a thousand years since she had seen him. Then they entered the chamber, the door of which they locked. The duke having seen the whole of this mystery, felt more satisfied; nor had he time to grow weary, for the gentleman told the lady that he was obliged to leave her sooner than usual, because the duke was going to the chase at four o'clock, and he durst not fail to attend him. The lady, who preferred honour to pleasure, did not attempt to hinder him from doing his duty; for what she prized most in their honourable intimacy was that it was a secret for all mankind.

The gentleman quitted the house at one o'clock in the morning, and his lady, in mantle and kerchief, escorted him not so far as she wished, for he made her go back for fear she should meet the duke, with whom he mounted again and returned to the château of Argilly. On the way, the duke never ceased protesting to the gentleman that he would rather die than ever divulge his secret; and his confidence was so confirmed, that no one at court stood higher in favour. The duchess was enraged at this. The duke forbade her ever to mention the subject any more to him, saying that he knew the truth, and was satisfied, for the lady whom the gentleman loved was handsomer than

herself. These words so stung the heart of the duchess that they threw her into an illness worse than fever. The duke tried to console her, but nothing would do unless he would tell her who was that fair lady who was so devotedly loved. So much did she importune him, that at last he quitted the chamber, saying to her, "If you speak to me any more of these things, we will part." This made her still more ill, and she pretended to feel her infant move, whereat the duke was so rejoiced that he went to bed to her; but when she saw that his passion for her was at the height, she turned from him saying, "Since you love neither wife nor child, monsieur, I entreat you let both die." These words she accompanied with so many tears and cries, that the duke was greatly afraid she would miscarry; wherefore, taking her in his arms, he entreated her to tell him what she wanted, protesting he had nothing that was not at her command. "Ah! monsieur," she replied, sobbing and crying, "what hope can I have that you would do a difficult thing for me, since you will not do the easiest and most reasonable thing in the world, which is to tell me the name of the mistress of the worst servant you ever had? I thought that you and I had but one heart, one soul, and one flesh, but I see that you regard me as a stranger, since you conceal your secrets from me as if I were an alien. You have confided to me many important secrets, and have never known that I divulged a tittle of them. You have had such proof that I have no will but yours, that you ought not to doubt but that I am more you than myself. If you have sworn never to tell anyone the gentleman's secret, you do not violate your oath in telling it to me, for I neither am nor can be other than yourself. I have you in my heart; I hold you between my arms; I have a child in my womb in whom you live; yet I cannot have your love as you have mine. The more faithful I am to you, the more cruel and austere you are to me. This makes me long a thousand times for the day

when a sudden death may deliver your child from such a father, and me from such a spouse. I hope it will soon come, since you prefer a faithless servant to your wife, to the mother of a child which is your own, and which is on the point of perishing because you will not tell me what I have the greatest longing to know."

So saying she embraced and kissed her husband, watering his face with her tears, and sobbing and crying so violently, that the poor duke, fearing he should lose both mother and child, resolved to tell her the truth; but he swore that if ever she mentioned it to anyone in the world she should die by no hand but his own. She accepted the condition; and then the poor abused duke told her all he had seen from beginning to end. She pretended to be satisfied, but in her heart it was quite otherwise. However, as she was afraid of the duke, she dissembled her passion as well as she could.

The duke, holding his court on a great feast-day, had called to it all the ladies of the country, his niece among the rest. After the banquet the dances began, and everyone did his devoir, but the duchess was too much vexed by the sight of her niece's beauty and grace to enjoy herself or to hide her spleen. Making all the ladies sit down, she turned the conversation on love; but seeing that Madame du Verger said not a word, she said to her, with a heart rankling with jealousy, "And you, fair niece, is it possible that your beauty is without a lover?"

"Madam," replied the Lady du Verger, "my beauty has not yet produced that effect, for since my husband's death I have had no lovers but his children; nor do I desire any others."

"Fair niece, fair niece," rejoined the duchess, with execrable spite, "there is no love so secret as not to be known, nor any little dog so well trained as not to be heard to bark."

I leave you to imagine the anguish of poor Madame du

Verger at finding that an affair she had thought so secret was published to her shame. The thought of her honour, so carefully guarded, and so unhappily lost, was torture to her; but the worst was the fear that her lover had broken his word to her, which she did not believe he could ever have done unless he loved some fairer lady, and in doting fondness had suffered her to extort the secret from him. However, she had so much self-command that she did not let her emotion be seen, but laughingly replied that she did not understand the language of brutes. But her heart was so wrung with grief that she rose, and passing through the duchess's chamber, entered a *garderobe* in sight of the duke, who was walking about. Thinking herself alone, she threw herself on a bed. A demoiselle, who had sat down beside it to sleep, roused herself and peeped through the curtains to see who it might be, and perceiving it was the duke's niece, who thought herself alone, she durst not speak, but remained as still as possible to listen, whilst the poor lady in a dying voice thus began her lamentation:

"Alas! what have I heard! What words of death have smitten my ears! O thou who was loved as man was never loved before, is this the reward of my chaste and virtuous love? O my heart! hast thou made so dangerous a choice, and attached thyself to the most faithless, artful, and mischievous-tongued of all men, mistaking him for the most faithful, upright, and secret? Is it possible, alas! that a thing hidden from all the world has been revealed to the duchess? My little dog, so well trained, sole agent of my long and virtuous friendship, it was not you that betrayed my secret: it was a man, with a voice more piercing than a dog's, and a heart more ungrateful than any beast's. It was he who, contrary to his oath and his word, divulged the happy life we long led without injuring anyone. O my friend! for whom alone my heart cherished love, a love wherewith my life has been preserved, has the beauty of the duchess metamorphosed you, as that of Circe did her

lovers? Has she turned you from virtue to vice, from good to bad, from a man into a savage beast? O my friend, though you have broken your word to me, I will keep mine, and never see you more after having revealed our intimacy. But as I cannot live without seeing you, I willingly yield to the excess of my sorrow, and will never seek any remedy for it either from reason or from medicine. Death alone shall end it, and that death will be more welcome to me than to remain in the world without my lover, without honour, and without contentment. Neither war nor death has taken my lover from me; my sins and transgressions have not deprived me of honour; nor has any bad conduct bereft me of happiness. It is cruel fortune that has made an ingrate of the most favoured of all men, and has brought upon me the contrary of what I deserved. O duchess, how delighted you were to make that jeering allusion to my little dog! Revel in a bliss that belongs to me alone. Laugh at her who thought to escape derision whilst loving virtuously and concealing it with care. How that word wrung my heart! How it made me red with shame and pale with jealousy! Heart, heart, I feel thou art undone. Ill-requited love burns thee, jealousy and grief turn thee to ice, and forbid thee all consolation. Through having too much adored the creature, my soul has forgotten the Creator. It must return to Him from whom a vain love detached it. Be assured, my soul, thou wilt find a Father more tender than the friend for whom thou has forgotten Him. O God, my creator, who art the true and perfect love, by whose grace the love I have borne my friend has been sullied by no vice, save that of loving too much, be pleased to receive in the greatness of Thy mercy the soul and spirit of her who repents of having broken Thy first and righteous command. Through the merits of Him whose love is incomprehensible, forgive the fault which excess of love made me commit, for my trust is in Thee alone. Farewell, my friend, whose unworthiness of that

name breaks my heart." So saying she fell backwards, her face ghastly, her lips blue, and her extremities cold.

At the same moment the gentleman she loved entered the reception-room, where the duchess was dancing with the other ladies. He looked round for his mistress, and not seeing her, went into the duchess's chamber, where he found the duke, who, guessing his purpose, whispered that she was gone into the *garderobe* and appeared to be unwell. The gentleman asked for leave to follow her, and the duke not only granted it, but urged him to do so. Entering the *garderobe* then, he found her at the last gasp; and throwing his arms round her, he said, "What is this, my love? Do you want to quit me?" Roused by the well-known voice, the poor lady opened her eyes to look upon him who was the cause of her death; but the look so increased her love and her anguish that with a piteous sigh she gave up the ghost.

The gentleman more dead than alive asked the demoiselle how the lady's illness had begun, and she told him all she had heard. He then knew that the duke had revealed his secret. His grief was so intense that, embracing the body of his mistress, he wept over it long in silence, and at last exclaimed, "Traitor, villain, wretch that I am. Why has not the penalty for my treachery fallen on me, and not on her who was innocent? Why did not Heaven's lightning blast me the day my tongue revealed our secret and virtuous love? Why did not the earth open to swallow up a wretch who violated his faith? May my tongue be punished as was that of the wicked rich man in hell! O heart, that too much feared death and exile, may eagles tear thee perpetually as they did that of Ixion! Alas, my dear friend, in thinking to hold you fast I have lost you. I thought to possess you long alive, with virtue and pleasure, and I embrace you dead, and you have been dissatisfied to your last gasp with me, my heart, and my tongue. O most faithful of women! I denounce myself as the most incon-

stant, faithless, and perfidious of men. I would I could complain of the duke, whose word I trusted, hoping by that means to prolong our agreeable life; but ought I not to have known that no one could keep my secret better than myself? The duke was more justifiable in telling his secret to his wife than I in telling mine to him. I am the only guilty one, the only one who deserves to be punished for the greatest crime ever committed between friends. I ought to have suffered him to throw me into the river as he threatened. You at least, dear one, would then be alive, and I should have closed my life with the glory of having observed the rule prescribed by true friendship; but having broken it I live still, and you are dead for having perfectly loved. Your pure heart could not know the baseness of mine and live. O my God, why didst Thou create me with a love so frivolous and a heart so ignorant? Why was I not the little dog that faithfully served his mistress? Alas! my little friend, I used to feel joy at the sound of your barking; but that joy is turned into sorrow, for having been the cause of another besides us two hearing your voice. Yet, sweetheart, neither love of the duchess nor of any other woman ever made me vary, though the wicked duchess has often solicited me to love her; but ignorance has undone me, for I thought by what I did to insure our intimacy for ever. But that ignorance does not make me the less guilty. I have revealed my mistress's secret, I have broken my word, and therefore it is that she is dead before me. Alas, sweetheart, will death be less cruel to me than to you, who have died only for having loved? Methinks death would not deign to touch my faithless and miserable heart. The loss of honour, and the memory of her I have lost through my fault, are more insupportable to me than ten thousand deaths. If anyone had cut short your days through mischance or malice, I should use my sword to avenge you. It is not reasonable, then, that I should pardon that murderer who has caused your death by a

deed more vile than if he had killed you with a sword. If I knew a more odious executioner than myself I would entreat him to do justice upon your perfidious lover. O love! I have offended thee from not having known how to love; and therefore thou wilt not succour me as thou hast succoured her who perfectly kept all thy laws. Nor is it just that I should make such a glorious end: it must be by my own hand. I have washed your face with my tears; I have implored your pardon; and it now only remains that my arm should make my body like yours, and send my soul whither yours is gone, in the assurance that a virtuous and honourable love ends neither in this world nor in the next."

Starting up then, like a frantic man, from the corpse, he drew his poniard, and stabbed himself to the heart, and then clasping his mistress in his arms for the second time, he kissed her so fondly that he seemed more like a blissful lover than a dead man. The demoiselle, seeing the deed, ran to the door and screamed for help. The duke, suspecting the disaster of those he loved, was the first to enter the *garderobe*, and on seeing the sad couple he tried to separate them, in order to save the gentleman if it were possible; but he held his mistress so fast that it was impossible to tear him from her until he had expired. Nevertheless, hearing the duke exclaim, "My God! who has been the cause of this?" "My tongue and yours, monsieur," he replied with a look of fury. So saying, he breathed his last, with his face laid on that of his mistress.

The duke, wishing to know more of the matter, constrained the demoiselle to tell him all she had seen and heard, which she did from beginning to end, without forgetting anything. The duke then, knowing that he was the cause of the whole mischief, threw himself on the bodies of the two lovers, and with cries and tears implored their pardon. He kissed them repeatedly; and then rising furiously, he drew the poniard out of the gentleman's body.

As a wild boar wounded by a spear runs impetuously at him who has struck the blow, so ran the duke at her who had wounded him to the soul. He found her still dancing in the reception-room, and gayer than usual, because she thought she had so well revenged herself on the Lady du Verger. Her husband seized her in the midst of the dance, and said, "You took the secret upon your life, and upon your life shall fall the forfeiture." So saying he grasped her by her head-dress, and buried the poniard in her bosom.

The astonished company thought the duke was out of his senses; but he had done the deed advisedly, and assembling all his servants on the spot, he recounted to them the glorious and melancholy story of his niece, and the wicked conduct of his wife: a narrative which drew tears from all his hearers. The duke then ordered that his wife should be buried in an abbey, which he founded, partly with a view to atone for the sin he had committed in killing his wife; and then he had a magnificent tomb erected in which the remains of his niece and of the gentleman were laid side by side, with an epitaph setting forth their tragic history. The duke made an expedition against the Turks, in which God so favoured him that he achieved glory and profit. Finding on his return that his eldest son was of age to govern, he became a monk, and retired to the abbey in which his wife and the two lovers were buried, and there he passed his old age happily with God.

FRANÇOIS RABELAIS

(1495–1553)

(I)

HOW A JUNIOR DEVIL WAS FOOLED BY A HUSBANDMAN OF POPE-FIGLAND

(Translated by Sir Thomas Urquhart and P. A. Motteux)

In the middle of July, the devil came to the place aforesaid, with all his crew at his heels, a whole choir of the younger fry of hell; and having m the farmer, said to him, Well, clod-pate, how hast thou done, since I went? Thou and I must share the concern. Ay, master devil, quoth the clown, it is but reason we should. Then he and his men began to cut and reap the corn: and, on the other side, the devil's imps fell to work, grubbing up and pulling out the stubble by the root.

The countryman had his corn thrashed, winnowed it, put it into sacks, and went with it to market. The same did the devil's servants, and sat them down there by the man to sell their straw. The countryman sold off his corn at a good rate, and with the money filled an old kind of a demi-buskin, which was fastened to his girdle. But the devil a sou the devils took: far from taking handsel, they were flouted and jeered by the country louts.

Market being over, quoth the devil to the farmer, Well, clown, thou hast choused me once, it is thy fault; chouse me twice, it will be mine. Nay, good sir devil, replied the farmer, how can I be said to have choused you, since it was your worship that chose first? The truth is, that, by this trick, you thought to cheat me, hoping that nothing would

spring out of the earth for my share, and that you should find whole under ground the corn which I had sowed, and with it tempt the poor and needy, the close hypocrite, or the covetous griper; thus making them fall into your snares. But troth, you must even go to school yet; you are no conjurer, for aught I see: for the corn that was sown is dead and rotten, its corruption having caused the generation of that which you saw me sell: so you chose the worst, and therefore are cursed in the gospel.[1] Well, talk no more of it, quoth the devil: what canst thou sow our field with for next year? If a man would make the best of it, answered the ploughman, it were fit he sow it with radishes. Now, cried the devil, thou talkest like an honest fellow, bumpkin: well, sow me good store of radishes, I will see and keep them safe from storms, and will not hail a bit on them. But harkye me, this time I bespeak for my share what shall be above ground; what is under shall be thine. Drudge on, looby, drudge on. I am going to tempt heretics; their souls are dainty victuals,[2] when broiled in rashers, and well powdered. My Lord Lucifer has the griping in the guts; they will make a dainty warm dish for his honour's maw.

When the season of radishes was come, our devil failed not to meet in the field, with a train of rascally underlings, all waiting devils, and finding there the farmer and his men, he began to cut and gather the leaves of the radishes. After him the farmer with his spade dug up the radishes, and clapped them up into pouches. This done, the farmer, and their gangs, hied them to market, and there the farmer presently made good money of his radishes: but the poor devil took nothing; nay, what was worse, he was made a common

[1] An old proverb, which involves slanderers and devils in one and the same malediction; for as much as the former choosing rather to speak evil than good of their neighbours, are like the devils, who, in the day of judgment, shall fall on the wicked, and let good men alone.

[2] Those whom the devil in those days tempted to burn the Lutherans, did really believe his devilship's mouth watered at the souls of those supposed strayers from the fold of the Church.

laughing stock by the gaping hoydens. I see thou hast played me a scurvy trick, thou villainous fellow, cried the angry devil: at last I am fully resolved even to make an end of the business betwixt thee and myself, about the ground, and these shall be the terms: we will clapperclaw each other, and whoever of us two shall first cry, Hold, shall quit his share of the field, which shall wholly belong to the conqueror. I fix the time for this trial of skill on this day seven-night; assure thyself that I will claw thee off like a devil. I was going to tempt your fornicators, bailiffs, perplexers of causes, scriveners, forgers of deeds, two-handed councillors, prevaricating solicitors, and other such vermin; but they were so civil as to send me word by an interpreter that they are all mine already. Besides, our master Lucifer is so cloyed with their souls, that he often sends them back to the smutty scullions, and slovenly devils of his kitchen, and they scarce go down with them, unless now and then, when they are high-seasoned.[1]

Some say there is no breakfast like a student's, no dinner like a lawyer's, no afternoon's nunchion like a vinedresser's, no supper like a tradesman's, no second supper[2] like a serving wench's, and none of these meals equal to a frockified hobgoblin's.[3] All this is true enough. Accordingly, at my Lord Lucifer's first course, hobgoblins, alias imps in cowls, are a standing dish. He willingly used to breakfast on students; but, alas, I do not know by what ill luck they have of late years joined the Holy Bible[4] to their studies: so the devil a one we can get down among us; and I verily believe that unless the hypocrites of the tribe of Levi help us in it, taking from the enlightened book-mongers their St.

[1] It is said, such sort of souls soon corrupt.

[2] *Reguoubilloner;* to steal an after supper: banquet late at nights; as servants frequently do when their masters and mistresses are in bed.

[3] "Nil mendicatis sociorum dulcius offis."

Il n'est vie que de coquin, no life like a beggar's says the old proverb.

[4] Here Rabelais smells of the faggot, says M. Duchat. A French way of speaking, significative of the danger one runs of being burned for a heretic.

Paul, either by threats, revilings, force, violence, fire, and faggot, we shall not be able to hook in any more of them, to nibble at below. He dines commonly on councillors, mischief-mongers, multipliers of law-suits, such as wrest and pervert right and law, and grind and fleece the poor: he never fears to want any of these. But who can endure to be wedded to a dish?

He said, the other day, at a full chapter, that he had a great mind to eat the soul of one of the fraternity of the cowl that had forgot to speak for himself in his sermon; and he promised double pay, and a large pension, to any one that should bring him such a tit-bit piping hot. We all went a hunting after such a rarity, but came home without the prey: for they all admonish the good women to remember their convent. As for afternoon nunchions, he has left them off, since he was so wofully griped with the cholic; his fosterers, sutlers, charcoal-men, and boiling cooks having been sadly mauled and peppered off in the northern countries.[1]

His high devilship sups very well on tradesmen, usurers, apothecaries, cheats, coiners, and adulterers of wares. Now and then, when he is on the merry pin, his second supper is of serving wenches; who, after they have, by stealth, soaked their faces with their master's good liquor, fill up the vessel with it at second hand, or with other stinking water.

Well, drudge on, boor, drudge on; I am going to tempt the students of Trebisonde [2] to leave father and mother, forgo for ever the established and common rule of living, disclaim and free themselves from obeying their lawful sovereign's edicts, live in absolute liberty, proudly despise every

[1] This seems to regard the expulsion of the monks out of England, under Henry VIII and Edward VI; and also that of the religious out of the two northern kingdoms.

[2] Read Trebizonde. The author seems here to derive the name of the imperial city of Trebizonde from the Greek τράπεζα, *mensa*, a table, for the opportunity of insinuating that none but gormandizers and idle bellies would take up with a cloistered life.

one, laugh at all mankind, and taking the fine jovial little cap of poetic licence,[1] become so many pretty hobgoblins.[2]

Note.—The stubble and the leaves of the radishes, which are all that falls to the young devil's share, while the countryman reaps the profit of the corn and fruit he had sowed in his field, show that the pretended papists only gave the outside and insignificant forms to the Church of Rome, and that their hearts and minds were not inclinable to follow its doctrine. Our author's honest boldness is very remarkable, both in this chapter and many of the next. He makes the young devil say, that at Lucifer's first course, hobgoblins (*alias* imps in cowls) are a standing dish. He willingly, says the imp, used to breakfast on students; but alas, I do not know by what ill luck they have of late joined the Holy Bible to their studies; so the devil a one can get down among us; and I verily believe, that unless the cafars (*i.e.* hypocrites of the tribe of Levi) help us in it, taking from the enlightened bookmongers their St. Paul, either by threats, revilings, force, violence, or fire and faggot, we shall not be able to hook in any more of them to nibble at below.

The foresters, sutlers, charcoalmen, and boiling cooks of hell, that were mauled and peppered off in the northern countries, are the monks and priests, who were routed there, particularly in England.

By the students of Trebisonde he means those of the popish universities, where, as he says, they are tempted by the devils (by which he means monks and priests, professors, and their tutors) to leave father and mother, forgo for ever the established and common rule of living, free themselves from obeying their lawful sovereign's edicts, live in absolute liberty, and taking the fine jovial little cap of poetic licence, become so many pretty hobgoblins. The cap of licence means their degrees, or the cowl; and poetic is only added to blind the thing; so the monks leave father and mother, and disclaim all authority but the pope's.—*M.*

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[1] Rabelais says, And taking the fine jovial little *biggin* of poetic innocence. On which M. Duchat observes *beguin* is the capuche or monachal hood, invented to distinguish from seculars (or people of the world) such persons as make professions of a benignity and an innocence worthy of the golden age of the poets. In Flanders they called *benings* and *beningues* (some years after the establishment of the two first orders of religious mendicants) certain men and certain women who, without making vows devoting themselves in an especial manner to works of charity and mercy, took, in imitation of the said religious, a sort of hood, as a badge, that should prevent people's looking upon them, to be entirely of the secular kind. From those words it is that they have since corruptly been called *beguins* and *beguines*, and at length their hood too was called *beguin*. Friar James de Guise, in his Chronicles of Hainault, vol. iii. ch. 133, says, the Countess of Flanders began the *benignage*, and instituted the first *chapellany*.

[2] *Farfadets gentils.* Gentlemen hobgoblins, *i.e.* gentlemen monks. The author ridicules the Benedictines and Bernardins, who assume the title of *dom* (from *dominus*) as if they were all gentlemen.

(II)

HOW PANURGE RELATED TO MASTER ÆDITUUS THE FABLE OF THE HORSE AND THE ASS

(Translated by Sir Thomas Urquhart and P. A. Motteux)

When we had crammed and crammed again, Ædituus took us into a chamber that was well furnished, hung with tapestry, and finely gilt. Thither he caused to be brought store of mirobolans, cashou, green ginger preserved with plenty of hippocras, and delicious wine. With those antidotes, that were like a sweet Lethe, he invited us to forget the hardships of our voyage; and at the same time he sent plenty of provisions on board our ship that rid in the harbour. After this, we then jogged to bed for that night; but the devil a bit poor pilgarlic could sleep one wink: the everlasting jingle jangle of the bells kept me awake whether I would or nø.

About midnight Ædituus came to wake us, that we might drink. He himself showed us the way, saying: You men of the other world say that ignorance is the mother of all evil, and so far you are right; yet for all that, you do not take the least care to get rid of it, but still plod on, and live in it, with it, and by it; for which a plaguy deal of mischief lights on you every day, and you are right enough served: you are perpetually ailing somewhat, making a moan and never right. It is what I was ruminating upon just now. And, indeed, ignorance keeps you here fastened in bed, just as that bully-rock Mars was detained by Vulcan's art: for all the while you do not mind that, you ought to spare some of your rest, and be as lavish as you can of the goods of this famous island. Come, come, you should have eaten three breakfasts already: and take this from me

for a certain truth, That if you would consume the mouth-ammunition of this island, you must rise betimes; eat them, they multiply; spare them, they diminish.

For example: mow a field in due season, and the grass will grow thicker and better: do not mow it, and in a short time it will be floored with moss. Let us drink, and drink again, my friends: come let us all carouse it. The leanest [1] of our birds are now singing to us all; we will drink to them, if you please. Let us take off one, two, three, nine [2] bumpers. *Non zelus, sed charitas.*

At the break of day he waked us again to take a dish of monastical brewess.[3] From that time we made but one meal, that only lasted the whole day: so that I cannot well tell how I may call it, whether dinner, supper, nunchion, or after-supper; only to get a stomach, we took a turn or two in the island, to see and hear the blessed singing birds.

At night Panurge said to Ædituus, Give me leave, sweet sir, to tell you a merry story of something that happened some three-and-twenty moons ago, in the country of Chastelleraud.

One day in April,[4] a certain gentleman's groom, Roger by name, was walking his master's horses in some fallow ground: there it was his good fortune to find a pretty shepherdess, feeding her bleating sheep and harmless lambkins, on the brow of a neighbouring mountain, in the shade of an adjacent grove: near her, some frisking kids tripped it over a green carpet of nature's own spreading; and to complete

[1] The mendicant friars, who sing their matins at midnight.

[2] Referring to the number of the Graces and Muses. *Aut ter bibendum aut novies:* a proverb of the ancients, who, in point of drinking, were nothing to compare with this Ædituus, who here unites all the lessons of the different sorts of claustral matins.

[3] *Soupe de prime.* So called from its being eaten at the hour of prime, which is the first of the canonical hours; Rabelais boasts much of these soups, and always calls them fat *soupes de prime*, because it is the first boiling, and very top of the porridge pot. The others, called by him greyhound soups, are less strong and succulent, by having more water poured in.

[4] April is an amorous month. And the country of Chastelleraud abounds with these Arcadian nightingales (Asses).

the landscape, there stood an ass. Roger, who was a wag, had a dish of chat with her, and after some ifs, ands, and buts, hems and heighs on her side, got her in the mind to get up behind him, to go and see his stable, and there take a bit by the bye in a civil way. While they were holding a parley, the horse, directing his discourse to the ass, (for all brute beasts spoke that year in divers places,) whispered these words in his ear: Poor ass, how I pity thee! thou slavest like any hack, I read it on thy crupper: thou dost well, however, since God has created thee to serve mankind; thou art a very honest ass: but not to be better rubbed down, curricombed, traped, and fed, than thou art, seems to me indeed to be too hard a lot. Alas! thou art all rough-coated,[1] in ill plight; jaded, foundered, crestfallen, and drooping, like a mooting duck, and feedest here on nothing but coarse grass, or briars and thistles: therefore do but pace it along with me, and thou shalt see how we noble steeds, made by nature for war, are treated. Come, thou wilt lose nothing by coming; I will get thee a taste of my fare. In troth, sir, I can but love you and thank you, returned the ass; I will wait on you, good Mr. Steed. Methinks, gaffer ass, you might as well have Sir Grandpaw Steed. O! cry mercy, good Sir Grandpaw, returned the ass; we country clowns are somewhat gross, and apt to knock words out of joint. However, if it please you, I will come after your worship at some distance, lest for taking this run, my side should chance to be firked and curried with a vengeance, as it is but too often, the more is my sorrow.

The shepherdess being got behind Roger, the ass followed, fully resolved to bait like a prince with Roger's steed; but when they got to the stable, the groom, who spied the grave animal, ordered one of his underlings to welcome him with

[1] It is *lanterné* in Rabelais, and means, thy whole body is transparent as a lantern, and the skin of thy sides depilated, *i.e.* as free from hair as the smoothest parchment.

a pitchfork, and curricomb him with a cudgel. The ass, who heard this, recommended himself mentally to the god Neptune,[1] and was packing off, thinking, and syllogizing within himself thus: Had not I been an ass, I had not come here among great lords, when I must needs be sensible that I was only made for the use of the small vulgar. Æsop had given me a fair warning of this in one of his fables. Well, I must e'en scamper, or take what follows.[2] With this he fell a trotting, and wincing, and yerking, and calcitrating, alias, kicking, and farting, and funking, and curvetting, and bounding, and springing, and galloping full drive, as if the devil had come for him *in propriâ personâ.*

The shepherdess, who saw her ass scour off, told Roger that it was her cattle, and desired he might be kindly used, or else she would not stir her foot over the threshold. Friend Roger no sooner knew this, but he ordered him to be fetched in, and that my master's horses should rather chop straw for a week together, than my mistress's beast should want his belly-full of corn.

The most difficult point was to get him back; for in vain the youngsters complimented and coaxed him to come. I dare not, said the ass, I am bashful. And the more they strove by fair means to bring him with them, the more the stubborn thing was untoward, and flew out at heels; insomuch that they might have been there to this hour, had not his mistress advised them to toss oats in a sieve, or in a blanket, and call him; which was done, and made him wheel about, and say, Oats by mackins! oats shall go to pot. *Adveniat;*[3] oats will do, there is evidence in the case: but none of the rubbing down, none of the firking.

[1] The ass saw the pitchfork held up to him. In this danger he addresses his prayer to Neptune, whose trident is a kind of fork.

[2] It is in the original, I must even scamper as quick as a bundle of asparagus is in boiling: a proverbial expression often used by the Emperor Augustus. See it both in Latin and Greek among the adagia in most school books.

[3] The pun is upon the word *avoine*, oats, and *adveniat*, let 'em come.

Thus melodiously singing (for, as you know, that Arcadian bird's note is very harmonious) he came to the young gentleman of the horse, alias, black garb, who brought him to the stable.

When he was there, they placed him next to the great horse, his friend, rubbed him down, curricombed him, laid clean straw under him up to the chin, and there he lay at rack and manger; the first stuffed with sweet hay, the latter with oats: which when the horse's valet de chambre sifted, he clapped down his lugs, to tell them by signs that he could eat it but too well without sifting, and that he did not deserve so great an honour.

When they had well fed, quoth the horse to the ass: Well, poor ass, how is it with thee now? How dost thou like this fare? Thou wert so nice at first, a body had much ado to get thee hither. By the fig, answered the ass, which, one of our ancestors eating, Philemon died laughing, this is all sheer ambrosia, good Sir Grandpaw; but what would you have an ass say? Methinks all this is yet but half cheer. Do not your worships here now and then use to take a leap? What leaping dost thou mean? asked the horse, the devil leap thee; dost thou take me for an ass? In troth, Sir Grandpaw, quoth the ass, I am somewhat a blockhead, you know, and cannot, for the heart's blood of me, learn so fast the court way of speaking of you gentlemen horses; I mean, don't you stallionize it sometimes here among your mettled fillies? Tush, whispered the horse, speak lower; for, by Bucephalus, if the grooms but hear thee, they will maul and belam thee thrice and threefold, so that thou wilt have but little stomach to a leaping bout. Cod so, man, we dare not so much as grow stiff at the tip of the lowermost snout, though it were but to leak or so, for fear of being jirked and paid out of our lechery. As for anything else, we are as happy as our master, and perhaps more. By this packsaddle, my old acquaintance, quoth the ass, I have done with you; a fart for thy litter and hay, and

a fart for thy oats; give me the thistles of our fields, since there we leap when we list: eat less, and leap more, I say: it is meat, drink, and cloth to us. Ah! friend Grandpaw, it would do thy heart good to see us at a fair, when we hold our provincial chapter! Oh! how we leap it, while our mistresses are selling their goslings and other poultry! With this they parted. Dixi: I have done.

Panurge then held his peace. Pantagruel would have had him to have gone on to the end of the chapter: but Ædituus said, A word to the wise is enough; I can pick out the meaning of that fable, and know who is that ass, and who the horse; but you are a bashful youth, I perceive. Well, know that there is nothing for you here; scatter no words. Yet, returned Panurge, I saw but even now a pretty kind of a cooing abbess-kite as white as a dove, and her I had rather ride than lead. May I never stir if she is not a dainty bit, and very well worth a sin or two. Heaven forgive me! I meant no more harm in it than you; may the harm I meant in it befall me presently.

Note.—It is observable, that about midnight, which is the time that many monks are to rise to go to prayers, Ædituus wakes his guests, that they might drink; telling them they should have eaten three breakfasts already, and that if they would consume the mouth ammunition of that country, they must rise betimes: Eat them, says he, they multiply; spare them, they diminish. The lean birds, who are singing to them while they are to drink, are the novices and sorry monklings, who chant at church matins or vespers, while the great ones snore or tope.

Panurge, who likes all this well enough, is yet for something else, and would mix the sports of love with those of Bacchus; and considering that those ecclesiastics enjoy the latter at their ease, yet they dare not taste of the first without danger, he brings in the fable of the ass, who slighted the delicious food of the high-mettled prancers, because they were not allowed to be familiar with the mares. Our author ingeniously makes Panurge, who was for copulating in a lawful way, relate this to the priest; by which he would insinuate, that it were much better for them to have a liberty to marry.—*M.*

CHARLES PERRAULT

(1628–1703)

(I)

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY IN THE WOOD

THERE was formerly a King and Queen, who were sorry that they had no children, so sorry that it cannot be expressed. They went to all the waters in the world; vows, pilgrimages, all ways were tried, and all to no purpose. At last, however, the Queen proved with child, and was brought to bed of a daughter. There was a very fine christening; and the Princess had for her god-mothers all the fairies they could find in the whole Kingdom (they found seven), that every one of them might give her a gift, as was the custom of fairies in those days. By this means the Princess had all the perfections imaginable.

After the ceremonies of the christening were over, all the company returned to the King's palace, where was prepared a great feast for the fairies. There was placed before every one of them a magnificent cover, with a case of massive gold, wherein were a spoon, knife, and fork, all of pure gold, set with diamonds and rubies. But as they were sitting down at table, they saw come into the hall a very old fairy, whom they had not invited, because it was above fifty years since she had been out of a certain tower, and she was believed to be either dead or enchanted. The King ordered her a cover, but could not furnish her with a case of gold as the others, because they had seven only made for the seven fairies. The old fairy fancied she was slighted, and muttered some threats between her teeth. One of the young fairies, who sat by her overheard how she

grumbled; and judging that she might give the little Princess some unlucky gift, went, as soon as they rose from the table, and hid herself behind the hangings, that she might speak last, and repair, as much as possibly she could, the evil which the old fairy might intend.

In the meanwhile, all the fairies began to give their gifts to the Princess. The youngest gave her for a gift, "that she should be the most beautiful person in the world;" the next, "that she should have the wit of an angel;" the third, "that she should have a wonderful grace in everything she did;" the fourth, "that she should dance perfectly well;" the fifth, "that she should sing like a nightingale;" and the sixth, "that she should play upon all kinds of music to the utmost perfection."

The old fairy's turn coming next, with a head shaking more with spite than age, she said, "that the Princess should have her hand pierced with a spindle, and die of the wound." This terrible gift made the whole company tremble, and everybody fell a-crying.

At this very instant the young fairy came out from behind the hangings, and spoke these words aloud: "Assure yourselves, O King and Queen, that your daughter shall not die of this disaster: It is true, I have not power to undo entirely what my elder has done. The Princess shall indeed pierce her hand with a spindle; but instead of dying, she shall only fall into a profound sleep, which shall last a hundred years; at the expiration of which, a King's son shall come and awaken her."

The King, to avoid the misfortune foretold by the fairy, caused immediately a proclamation to be made, whereby everybody was forbidden, on pain of death, to spin with a distaff and spindle, or to have so much as any spindle in their houses. About fifteen or sixteen years after, the King and Queen being gone to one of their houses of pleasure, the young Princess happened one day to divert herself in running up and down the palace; when going from one

apartment to another, she came into a little room on the top of a tower, where a good old woman, alone, was spinning with her spindle. This good woman had never heard of the King's proclamation against spindles. "What are you doing there, Goody?" said the Princess; "I am spinning, my pretty child," said the old woman, who did not know who she was. "Ha!" said the Princess, "this is very pretty; how do you do it? give it to me, that I may see if I can do so." She had no sooner taken it into her hand than, whether being very hasty at it, somewhat unhandy, or that the decree of the fairy had so ordained it, it ran into her hand, and she fell down in a swoon.

The good old woman, not knowing very well what to do in this affair, cried out for help. People came in from every quarter in great numbers; they threw water upon the Princess's face, unlaced her, struck her on the palms of her hands, and rubbed her temples with Hungary water; but nothing would bring her to herself.

And now the King, who came up at the noise, bethought himself of the prediction of the fairies, and judging very well that this must necessarily come to pass, since the fairies had said it, caused the Princess to be carried into the finest apartment in his palace, and to be laid upon a bed all embroidered with gold and silver. One would have taken her for a little angel, she was so very beautiful; for her swooning away had not diminished one bit of her complexion; her cheeks were carnation, and her lips like coral; indeed her eyes were shut; but she was heard to breathe softly, which satisfied those about her that she was not dead. The King commanded that they should not disturb her, but let her sleep quietly till her hour of waking was come.

The good fairy, who had saved her life by condemning her to sleep a hundred years, was in the Kingdom of Matakin, twelve thousand leagues off, when this accident befell the Princess; but she was instantly informed of it by a little

dwarf, who had boots of seven leagues, that is, boots with which he could tread over seven leagues of ground at one stride. The fairy came away immediately, and she arrived, about an hour after, in a fiery chariot drawn by dragons. The King handed her out of the chariot, and she approved of everything he had done; but as she had great foresight, she thought, when the Princess should awake, she might not know what to do with herself, being all alone in this old palace; and this was what she did: she touched with her wand everything in the palace (except the King and Queen), governesses, maids of honour, ladies of the bed-chamber, gentlemen, officers, stewards, cooks, under-cooks, scullions, guards with their beef-eaters, pages, and footmen; she likewise touched all the horses in the stables, as well pads as others, the great dogs in the outer court, and pretty little Mopsey too, the Princess's little spaniel bitch, which lay by her on her bed.

Immediately upon her touching them, they all fell asleep, that they might not awake before their mistress, and that they might be ready to wait upon her when she wanted them. The very spits at the fire, as full as they could hold of partridges and pheasants, did fall asleep also. All this was done in a moment. Fairies are not long in doing their business.

And now the King and Queen, having kissed their dear child without waking her, went out of the palace, and put forth a proclamation that nobody should dare to come near it. This, however, was not necessary; for in a quarter of an hour's time, there grew up, all around about the park, such a vast number of trees, great and small, bushes and brambles, twining one within another, that neither man nor beast could pass through; so that nothing could be seen but the very top of the towers of the palace; and that too not unless it was a good way off. Nobody doubted but the fairy gave herein a very extraordinary sample of her art, that the Princess, while she continued

sleeping, might have nothing to fear from any curious people.

When a hundred years were gone and passed, the son of the King then reigning, and who was of another family from that of the Sleeping Princess, being out a-hunting on that side of the country, asked what those towers were which he saw in the middle of a great thick wood. Everyone answered according as they had heard; some said, "that it was a ruinous old castle haunted by spirits;" others, "that all the sorcerers and witches of the country kept their sabbath or meeting there." The most common opinion was, "that an ogre lived there, and that he carried thither all the little children he could catch, that he might eat them up at his leisure, without anybody's being able to follow him, as having himself only the power to pass through the wood."

The Prince was at a stand, not knowing what to believe, when a very aged countryman spoke to him thus: "May it please your Royal Highness, it is now above fifty years since I heard from my father, who heard my grandfather say, that there then was in this castle a Princess, the most beautiful ever seen; that she must sleep a hundred years, and should be waked by a King's son for whom she was reserved." The young Prince was on fire at those words, believing, without weighing the matter, that he could put an end to this rare adventure; and pushed by love and honour resolved that moment to look into it.

Scarce had he advanced towards the wood, when all the great trees, the bushes and brambles, gave way of themselves to let him pass through; he walked up to the castle, which he saw at the end of a large avenue, which he went into; and what a little surprised him was, that he saw none of his people could follow him, because the trees closed again as soon as he had passed through them. However, he did not cease from continuing his way; a young and amorous Prince is always valiant. He came to a

spacious outward court, where everything he saw might have frozen up the most fearless person with horror. There reigned all over a most frightful silence; the image of death everywhere showed itself, and there was nothing to be seen but stretched-out bodies of men and animals, all seeming to be dead. He, however, very well knew, by the ruby faces and pimpled noses of the beef-eaters, that they were only asleep; and their goblets, wherein still remained some drops of wine, showed plainly, that they fell asleep in their cups.

He then crossed a court paved with marble, went up the stairs, and came into the guard chamber, where the guards were standing in their ranks with their muskets upon their shoulders, and snoring as loud as they could. After that he went through several rooms full of gentlemen and ladies all asleep, some standing, others sitting. At last he came into a chamber all gilded with gold, where he saw, upon a bed, the curtains of which were all open, the finest sight ever beheld: a Princess, who appeared to be about fifteen or sixteen years of age, and whose bright and, in a manner, resplendent beauty, had somewhat in it divine. He approached with trembling and admiration, and fell down before her upon his knees.

And now, as the enchantment was at an end, the Princess awaked, and looking on him with eyes more tender than the first view might seem to admit of: "Is it you, my Prince?" said she to him; "you have waited a long while."

The Prince, charmed with these words, and much more with the manner in which they were spoken, knew not how to show his joy and gratitude; he assured her that he loved her better than he did himself: their discourse was not well connected, they did weep more than talk; little eloquence, and a great deal of love. He was more at a loss than she, and we need not wonder at it; she had time to think on what to say to him; for it is very probable (though history mentions nothing of it) that the good fairy, during so long a

sleep, had given her very agreeable dreams. In short, they talked four hours together, and yet they said not half what they had to say.

In the meanwhile, all the palace awaked; everyone thought upon their particular business; and as all of them were not in love, they were ready to die for hunger: the chief lady of honour being as sharp set as other folks, grew very impatient, and told the Princess aloud, "that supper was served up." The Prince helped the Princess to rise; she was entirely dressed, and very magnificently; but his Royal Highness took care not to tell her, that she was dressed like his great-grandmother, and had a point-band peeping over a high collar; she looked not a bit the less beautiful and charming for all that.

They went into the great hall of looking-glasses, where they supped, and were served by the Princess's officers; the violins and hautboy played old tunes, but very excellent, though it was now above a hundred years since they had played; and after supper, without losing any time, the Lord Almoner married them in the chapel of the castle, and the chief lady of honour drew the curtains. They had but very little sleep; the Princess had no occasion, and the Prince left her the next morning to return into the city, where his father must needs have been in pain for him. The Prince told him that he lost his way in the forest while he was hunting, and that he had lain at the cottage of a collier, who him gave cheese and brown bread.

The King, his father, who was a good man, believed him, but his mother could not be persuaded this was true; and seeing that he went almost every day a-hunting, and that he always had some excuse ready for so doing, though he had lain out three or four nights together, she began to suspect he had some little amour, for he lived with the Princess above two whole years, and had by her two children, the elder of which, who was a daughter, was named *Morning*, and the younger, who was a son, they called *Day*, because

he was a great deal handsomer and more beautiful than his sister.

The Queen spoke several times to her son to inform herself after what manner he did pass his time, and that in this he ought, in duty, to satisfy her; but he never dared to trust her with his secret, he feared her, though he loved her, for she was of the race of the *Ogres*, and the King would never have married her, had it not been for her vast riches; it was whispered about the court, "that she had *Ogreish* inclinations, and that whenever she saw little children passing by, she had all the difficulty in the world to refrain from falling upon them." And so the Prince would never tell her one word.

But when the King was dead, which happened about two years afterwards, and he saw himself lord and master, he openly declared his marriage; and he went in great ceremony to conduct his Queen to the palace. They made a magnificent entry into the capital city, she riding between her two children.

Some time after, the King went to make war with the Emperor *Cantalabutte*, his neighbour. He left the government of the kingdom to the Queen, his mother, and earnestly recommended to her the care of his wife and children. He was obliged to continue his expedition all the summer, and as soon as he departed, the Queen-mother sent her daughter-in-law, and her children, to a country-house among the woods, that she might, with the more ease, gratify her horrible longing.

Some few days afterwards she went thither herself, and said to her clerk of the kitchen, "I have a mind to eat little *Morning* for my dinner to-morrow." "Ah! Madam," cried the clerk of the kitchen. "I will have it so," replied the Queen (and this she spoke in the tone of an Ogress, who had a strong desire to eat fresh meat), "and will eat her with sauce, Robert." The poor man, knowing very well that he must not play tricks with Ogresses, took his

great knife, and went up into little *Morning's* chamber. She was then four years old, and came up to him, jumping and laughing, to take him about the neck, and ask him for some sugar-candy. Upon which he began to weep; the great knife fell out of his hand, and he went into the back-yard, and killed a little lamb, and dressed it with such good sauce that his mistress assured him she had never eaten anything so good in her life. He had at the same time taken up little *Morning*, and carried her to his wife, to conceal her in the lodging he had at the bottom of the courtyard.

About eight days afterwards, the wicked Queen said to the clerk of the kitchen, "I will sup upon little *Day*." He answered not a word, being resolved to cheat her, as he had before. He went to find out little *Day*, and saw him with a little foil in his hand, with which he was fencing with a monkey; the child being then only three years of age. He took him up in his arms, and carried him to his wife, that she might conceal him in her chamber along with his sister, and in the room of little *Day* cooked up a young kid, very tender, which the Ogress found to be wonderfully good.

This was hitherto all mighty well; but one evening this wicked Queen said to her clerk of the kitchen, "I will eat the young Queen with the same sauce I had with her children." It was now that the poor clerk of the kitchen despaired of being able to deceive her. The young Queen was turned of twenty, not reckoning the hundred years she had been asleep: her skin was somewhat tough, though very fair and white; and how to find in the yard a beast so firm was what puzzled him. He took a resolution, that he might save his own life, to cut the Queen's throat; and going up into her chamber, with intent to do it at once, he put himself into as great a fury as he could possibly, and came into the young Queen's room, with his dagger in his hand: he would not, however, surprise her, but told her, with a great deal of respect, the orders he had received

from the Queen-mother. "Do it, do it," said she, stretching out her neck; "execute your orders, and then I shall go and see my children, my poor children, whom I so much and so tenderly loved," for she thought them dead ever since they had been taken away without her knowledge. "No, no, Madam," cried the poor clerk of the kitchen, all in tears; "you shall not die, and yet you shall see your children again; but then you must go home with me to my lodgings, where I have concealed them, and I shall deceive the Queen once more by giving her, in your stead a young hind." Upon this he forthwith conducted her to his chamber, where, leaving her to embrace her children and cry along with them, he went and dressed a hind, which the Queen had for her supper, and devoured it with the same appetite as if it had been the young Queen. Exceedingly was she delighted with her cruelty, and she had invented a story to tell the King, at his return, "how the mad wolves had eaten up the Queen, his wife, and her two children."

One evening, as she was, according to her custom, rambling round about the courts and yards of the palace, to see if she could smell any fresh meat, she heard in a ground-room little *Day* crying, for his mamma was going to whip him, because he had been naughty; and she heard at the same time little *Morning* begging pardon for her brother.

The Ogress presently knew the voices of the Queen and her children, and being quite mad that she had been thus deceived, she commanded next morning, by break of day (with a most horrible voice, which made everybody tremble) that they should bring into the middle of the great court a large tub, which she caused to be filled with toads, vipers, snakes, and all sorts of serpents, in order to have thrown into it the Queen and her children, the clerk of the kitchen, his wife and maid; all whom she had given orders should be brought thither with their hands tied behind them.

They were brought out accordingly, and the executioners were just going to throw them into the tub, when the King (who was not so soon expected) entered the court on horseback (for he came post), and asked, with the utmost astonishment, "what was the meaning of that horrible spectacle." No one dared to tell him, when the Ogress, all enraged to see what had happened, threw herself head foremost into the tub, and was instantly devoured by the ugly creatures she had ordered to be thrown into it for others. The King could not but be very sorry, for she was his mother; but he soon comforted himself with his beautiful wife and his pretty children.

The Moral

To get a husband rich, genteel, and gay,
Of humour sweet, some time to stay,
Is natural enough, 'tis true;
But then to wait a hundred years,
And all that while asleep, appears
A thing entirely new.
Now at this time of day,
Not one of all the sex we see
To sleep with such profound tranquillity;
But yet this fable seems to let us know,
That very often Hymen's blisses sweet,
Altho' some tedious obstacles they meet,
Which makes us for them a long while to stay,
Are not less happy for approaching slow,
And that we nothing lose by such delay
But warm'd by Nature's lambent fires,
The sex so ardently aspires
Of this bless'd state the sacred joys t'embrace,
And with such earnest heart pursue 'em:
I've not the will, I must confess,
Nor yet the power, nor fine address,
To preach this moral to 'em.

(II)

THE MASTER CAT, OR PUSS IN BOOTS

THERE was a miller who had left no estate to the three sons he had than his mill, his ass, and his cat. The partition was soon made. Neither the scrivener nor attorney were sent for. They would soon have eaten up all the patrimony. The eldest had the mill, the second the ass, and the youngest nothing but the cat.

The poor young fellow was quite comfortless at having so poor a lot. "My brothers," said he, "may get their living handsomely enough by joining their flocks together; but for my part, when I have eaten up my cat, and made me a muff of his skin, I must die with hunger." The Cat, who heard all this, but made as if he did not, said to him with a grave and serious air: "Do not thus afflict yourself, my good master; you have nothing else to do but to give me a bag and get a pair of boots for me, that I may scamper through the dirt and brambles, and you shall see that you have not so bad a portion in me as you imagine."

Though the Cat's master did not build very much upon what he said, he had, however, often seen him play a great many cunning tricks to catch rats and mice; as when he used to hang by the heels, or hide himself in the meal, and make as if he was dead; so that he did not altogether despair of his affording him some help in his miserable condition. When the Cat had what he asked for, he booted himself very gallantly; and putting his bag about his neck, he held the strings of it in his fore-paws, and went into a warren where was a great abundance of rabbits. He put bran and sowthistle into his bag, and stretching himself out at length, as if he had been dead, he waited for some young rabbits, not yet acquainted with the deceits of the world, to come and rummage his bag for what he had put into it.

Scarce was he laid down but he had what he wanted; a rash and foolish young rabbit jumped into his bag, and Monsieur Puss, immediately drawing close the strings, took and killed him without pity. Proud of his prey, he went with it to the palace, and asked to speak with his Majesty. He was shown upstairs into the King's apartments, and making a low reverence, said to him: "I have brought you, Sir, a rabbit of the warren, which my noble Lord, the Marquis of Carabas" (for that was the title which Puss was pleased to give his master) "has commanded me to present to your Majesty from him." "Tell thy master," said the King, "that I thank him, and that he does me a great deal of pleasure."

Another time he went and hid himself among some standing corn, holding still his bag open; and when a brace of partridges ran into it, he drew the strings and so caught them both. He went and made a present of them to the King, as he had done before of the rabbits which he had taken in the warren. The King in like manner received the partridges with great pleasure, and ordered him some Malvoisie to drink.

The Cat continued for two or three months thus to carry his Majesty, from time to time, game of his master's taking. One day, in particular, when he knew for certain that he was to take the air along the river-side, with his daughter, the most beautiful princess in the world, he said to his master: "If you will follow my advice, your fortune is made; you have nothing else to do but go and wash yourself in the river, in the part that I shall show you, and leave the rest to me." The Marquis of Carabas did what the Cat advised him to without knowing why or wherefore.

While he was washing, the King passed by, and the Cat began to cry out as loud as he could: "Help, help, my Lord Marquis of Carabas is going to be drowned." At this noise the King put his head out of the coach window,

and finding it was the Cat who had often brought him such good game, he commanded his guards to run immediately to the assistance of his Lordship the Marquis of Carabas.

While they were drawing the poor Marquis out of the river, the Cat came up to the coach, and told the King that "while his master was washing there came by some rogues who went off with his clothes, though he had cried out thieves! thieves! several times as loud as he could." This cunning Cat had hidden them under a great stone. The King immediately commanded the officers of his wardrobe to run and fetch one of the best suits for the Lord Marquis of Carabas.

The King caressed him after a very extraordinary manner; and as the fine clothes he had given him extremely set off his good mien (for he was well made and very handsome in his person), the King's daughter took a secret inclination to him, and the Marquis of Carabas had no sooner cast two or three respectful and somewhat tender glances but she fell in love with him to distraction. The King would needs have him come into the coach and partake of the airing. The Cat, quite overjoyed to see his project begin to succeed, marched on before, and meeting some countrymen who were mowing a meadow, he said to them: "Good people, you who are mowing, if you do not tell the King that the meadow you mow belongs to my Lord Marquis of Carabas, you shall be chopped as small as herbs for the pot."

The King did not fail of asking of the mowers to whom the meadow they were mowing belonged. "To my Lord Marquis of Carabas," answered they altogether; for the Cat's threats had made them terribly afraid. "You see, Sir," said the Marquis, "this is a meadow which never fails to yield a plentiful harvest every year." The Master Cat, who went still on before them, met with some reapers, and said to them: "Good people, you who are reaping, if you

do not tell the King that all this corn belongs to the Marquis of Carabas, you shall be chopped as small as herbs for the pot."

The King, who passed by a moment after, would needs know to whom all the corn which he then saw, did belong. "To my Lord Marquis of Carabas," replied the reapers; and the King was very well pleased with it, as well as the Marquis, whom he congratulated thereupon. The Master Cat, who went always before, said the same words to all he met; and the King was astonished at the vast estates of my Lord Marquis of Carabas.

Monsieur Puss came at last to a stately castle, the master of which was an Ogre, the richest that had ever been known; for all the lands which the King had then gone over belonged, with this castle, to him. The Cat, who had taken care to inform himself who this Ogre was, and what he could do, asked to speak to him, saying, "he could not pass so near the castle without having the honour of paying his respects to him."

The Ogre received him as civilly as an Ogre could do, and made him sit down. "I have been assured," said the Cat, "that you have the gift of being able to change yourself into all sorts of creatures you have a mind to; you can, for example, transform yourself into a lion or elephant, and the like." "This is true," answered the Ogre very briskly, "and to convince you, you shall see me now become a lion." Puss was so badly terrified at the sight of a lion so near him that he immediately got into the gutter, not without abundance of trouble and danger because of his boots, which were of no use at all to him in walking upon the tiles. A little while after, when the Ogre had resumed his natural form, he came down, and owned he had been very much frightened.

"I have been, moreover, informed," said the Cat, "but I know not how to believe it, that you have also the power to take upon you the shape of the smallest animals; for

example, to change yourself into a rat or a mouse, but I must own to you I take this to be impossible."

"Impossible!" cried the Ogre; "you shall see that presently," and at the same time changed himself into a mouse, and began to run about the floor. Puss no sooner perceived this but he fell upon him and ate him up.

Meanwhile the King, who saw, as he passed, this fine castle of the Ogre, had a mind to go into it. Puss, who heard the noise of his Majesty's coach running over the drawbridge, ran out, and said to the King, "Your Majesty is welcome to this castle of my Lord Marquis of Carabas." "What! my Lord Marquis," cried the King, "does this castle also belong to you? There can be nothing finer than this court, and all the stately buildings which surround it; let us go into it, if you please." The Marquis gave his hand to the Princess and followed the King, who went up first. They passed into a spacious hall, where they found a magnificent collation, which the Ogre had prepared for his friends, who were that very day to visit him, but dared not to enter, knowing the King was there. His Majesty was perfectly charmed with the good qualities of my Lord Marquis of Carabas, as was his daughter, who was fallen violently in love with him; and seeing the vast estate he possessed, said to him, after having drank five or six glasses: "It will be owing to yourself only, my Lord Marquis, if you are not my Son-in-Law." The Marquis making several low bows, accepted the honour which his Majesty conferred upon him, and forthwith that very same day married the Princess.

Puss became a great Lord, and never ran after mice any more, only for his diversion.

(III)

CINDERILLA, OR, THE LITTLE GLASS SLIPPER

ONCE there was a gentleman who married for his second wife the proudest and most haughty woman that was ever seen. She had, by a former husband, two daughters of her own humour, who were indeed exactly like her in all things. He had likewise by another wife a young daughter, but of unparalleled goodness and sweetness of temper, which she took from her mother, who was the best creature in the world.

No sooner were the ceremonies of the wedding over, but the step-mother began to show herself in her own colours. She could not bear the good qualities of this pretty girl; and the less because they made her own daughters appear the more odious. She employed her in the meanest work of the house; she scoured the dishes, tables, etc., and scrubbed madam's chamber, and those of the misses, her daughters; she lay up in a sorry garret, upon a wretched straw bed, while her sisters lay in fine rooms, with floors all inlaid, upon beds of the very newest fashion, and where they had looking-glasses so large that they might see themselves at their full length from head to foot. The poor girl bore all patiently, and dared not tell her father, who would have rattled her off; for his wife governed him entirely. When she had done her work she used to go into the chimney-corner and sit down among cinders and ashes, which made her commonly be called Cinderbreech; but the younger, who was not so rude and uncivil as the elder, called her Cinderilla. However, Cinderilla, notwithstanding her mean apparel, was a hundred times handsomer than her sisters, though they were always dressed very richly.

It happened that the King's son gave a ball, and invited

all persons of fashion to it. Our young misses were also invited; for they cut a very grand figure among the quality. They were mightily delighted at this invitation, and wonderfully busy in choosing out such gowns, petticoats, and headclothes as might best become them. This was a new trouble to Cinderilla; for it was she who ironed her sisters' linen and plaited their ruffles. They talked all day of nothing but how they should be dressed. "For my part," said the elder, "I will wear my red velvet suit with French trimming." "And I," said the younger, "shall only have my usual petticoat; but then to make amends for that I will put on my gold-flowered mantua and my diamond stomacher, which is far from being the most ordinary in the world." They sent for the best tire-woman they could get to make up their head-dresses and adjust their double pinners, and they had red brushes and patches from Mademoiselle de la Poché.

Cinderilla was likewise called up to them to be consulted in all these matters, for she had excellent notions, and advised them always for the best; nay, and offered her service to dress their heads, which they were very willing she should do. As she was doing this they said to her: "Cinderilla, would you not be glad to go to the ball?" "Ah!" said she, "you only jeer me, it is not for such as I am to go thither." "Thou art in the right of it," replied they, "it would make the people laugh to see a Cinderbreech at a ball." Anyone but Cinderilla would have dressed their heads awry, but she was very good and dressed them perfectly well. They were almost two days without eating, so much were they transported with joy. They broke above a dozen of laces in trying to be laced up close, that they might have a fine slender shape, and they were continually at their looking-glass. At last the happy day came; they went to Court, and Cinderilla followed them with her eyes as long as ever she could, and when she lost sight of them, she fell a-crying.

Her Godmother, who saw her all in tears asked her "what was the matter?" "I wish I could—I wish I could——" She was not able to speak the rest, being interrupted by her tears and sobbing. This Godmother of hers, who was a fairy, said to her, "Thou wishest thou couldst go to the ball, is it not so?" "Y-es," cried Cinderilla with a great sigh. "Well," said her Godmother, "be but a good girl and I will contrive that thou shalt go." Then she took her into her chamber and said to her: "Run into the garden and bring me a pompion." Cinderilla went immediately to gather the finest she could get, and bring it to her Godmother, not being able to imagine how this pompion could make her go to the ball. Her Godmother then scooped out all the inside of it, having left nothing but the rind; which done, she struck it with her wand, and the pompion was instantly turned into a fine coach, gilded all over with gold.

She then went to look for the mouse-trap, where she found six mice all alive, and ordered Cinderilla to lift up the little trap-door, when, giving each mouse as it went out a little tap with her wand, the mouse was that moment turned into a fair horse, which altogether made a very fine set of six horses, of a beautiful mouse-coloured dapple-grey. Being at a loss for a coachman,—"I will go and see," says Cinderilla, "if there be ever a rat in the rat-trap; we may make a coachman of him."

"Thou art in the right," replied her Godmother; "go and look." Cinderilla brought the trap to her, and in it were three huge rats. The fairy made the choice of one of the three, which had the largest beard, and having touched him with her wand, he was turned into a fat jolly coachman, who had the smartest whiskers that eyes ever beheld.

After that, she said to her: "Go again into the garden, and you will find six lizards behind the watering-pot; bring them to me." She had no sooner done so but her Godmother turned them into six footmen, who skipped up

behind the coach with their liveries all bedecked with gold and silver, and clung as close behind each other as if they had done nothing else all their whole lives. The fairy then said to Cinderilla: "Well, well, you see here an equipage fit to go to the ball with; are you not pleased with it?" "Oh, yes," cried she, "but must I go thither as I am, in these prison-nasty rags?" Her Godmother only just touched her with her wand, and at the same instant her clothes were turned into cloth of gold and silver, all beset with jewels.

Being thus decked out she got into her coach; but her Godmother, above all things, commanded her not to stay till after midnight, telling her at the same time, "that if she stayed at the ball one moment longer, her coach would be a pompion again, her horses mice, her coachman a rat, her footmen lizards, and her clothes become just as they were before."

She promised her Godmother "she would not fail of leaving the ball before midnight;" and then away she drives, scarce able to contain herself for joy. The King's son, who was told that a great Princess, whom nobody knew, was come, ran out to receive her; he gave her his hand as she alighted out of the coach, and led her into the ball, among all the company. There was immediately a profound silence, they left off dancing, and the violins ceased to play, so attentive was everyone to contemplate the singular beauties of this unknown new-comer. Nothing was then heard but a confused noise of "Ha! how handsome she is!" The King himself, old as he was, could not help ogling her, and telling the Queen softly, "that it was a long time since he had seen so beautiful and lovely a creature." All the ladies were busied in considering her clothes and head-dress, that they might have some made next day after the same pattern, provided they could meet with such fine material, and as able hands to make them.

The King's son conducted her to the most honourable

seat, and afterwards took her out to dance with him: she danced so very gracefully that they all more and more admired her. A fine collation was served, whereof the young Prince ate not a morsel, so intent was he busied in gazing on her. She went and sat down by her sisters, showing them a thousand civilities, giving them part of the oranges and citrons which the Prince had presented her with, which very much surprised them, for they did not know her. While Cinderilla was thus amusing her sisters, she heard the clock strike eleven and three-quarters, whereupon she immediately made a curtsey to the company, and hasted away as fast as she could.

Being got home, she ran to seek out her Godmother, and after having thanked her, she said: "She could not but heartily wish she might go next day to the ball, because the King's son had desired her." As she was eagerly telling her Godmother whatever had passed at the ball, her two sisters knocked at the door, which Cinderilla ran and opened. "How long you have stayed!" cried she, gaping, rubbing her eyes and stretching herself as if she had been just awakened out of her sleep. She had not, however, any manner of inclination to sleep since they went from home. "If thou hadst been at the ball," says one of her sisters, "thou wouldst not have been tired with it; there came thither the finest Princess, the most beautiful ever seen with mortal eyes; she showed us a thousand civilities, and gave us oranges and citrons." Cinderilla seemed very indifferent in the matter; indeed she asked them the name of that Princess; but they told her they did not know it; and that the King's son was very uneasy on her account, and would give all the world to know where she was. At this, Cinderilla, smiling, replied: "She must then be very beautiful indeed; Lord! how happy have you been; could not I see her? Ah! dear Miss Charlotte, do lend me your yellow suit of clothes, which you wear every day."—"Ay, to be sure!" cried Miss Charlotte, "lend my clothes

to such a dirty Cinderbreech as thou art; who's the fool then?"—Cinderilla, indeed, expected some such answer, and was very glad of the refusal; for she would have been sadly put to it if her sister had lent her what she asked for jestingly.

The next day the two sisters were at the ball, and so was Cinderilla, but dressed more magnificently than before. The King's son was always by her, and never ceased his compliments and amorous speeches to her; to whom all this was so far from being tiresome that she quite forgot what her Godmother had recommended to her; so that she, at last, counted the clock striking twelve, when she took it to be no more than eleven; she then rose up and fled as nimbly as a deer. The Prince followed, but could not overtake her. She left behind one of her glass slippers, which the Prince took up most carefully. She got home, quite out of breath, without coach or footmen, and in her nasty old clothes, having nothing left her of all her finery but one of her little slippers, fellow to that she dropped. The guards at the palace were asked "if they had seen a Princess go out?" who said, "They had seen nobody go out but a young girl very meanly dressed, and who had more the air of a country wench than a gentlewoman."

When the two sisters returned from the ball, Cinderilla asked them "if they had been well diverted, and if the fine lady had been there?" They told her, "Yes, but that she hurried away immediately when it struck twelve, and with so much haste that she dropped one of her little glass slippers, the prettiest in the world, and which the King's son had taken up; that he had done nothing but look at her all the time of the ball, and that most certainly he was very much in love with the beautiful person who owned the slipper."

What they said was very true; for a few days after the King's son caused it to be proclaimed by sound of trumpet,

that he would marry her whose foot this slipper could just fit. They whom he employed began to try it upon the Princesses, then the Duchesses, and all the Court, but in vain; it was brought to the two sisters, who did all they possibly could to thrust their foot into the slipper, but they could not effect it. Cinderilla, who saw all this, and knew her slipper, said to them, laughing: "Let me see if it will fit me?" Her sisters burst out a-laughing, and began to banter her. The gentleman who was sent to try the slipper looked earnestly at Cinderilla, and finding her very handsome, said, "It was but just that she should try, and that he had orders to let everyone make trial." He obliged Cinderilla to sit down, and putting the slipper to her foot, he found it went very easily, and fitted her as if it had been made of wax. The astonishment her two sisters were in was excessively great, but still abundantly greater when Cinderilla pulled out of her pocket the other slipper, and put it on her foot. Thereupon, in came her Godmother, who, having touched with her wand Cinderilla's clothes, made them richer and more magnificent than any of those she had before.

And now her two sisters found her to be that fine beautiful lady whom they had seen at the ball. They threw themselves at her feet to beg pardon for all the ill-treatment they had made her undergo. Cinderilla took them up, and as she embraced them, cried, "that she forgave them with all her heart, and desired them always to love her." She was conducted to the young Prince dressed as she was; he thought her more charming than ever, and a few days after married her. Cinderilla who was no less good than beautiful, gave her two sisters lodgings in the palace, and that very same day matched them with two great lords of the Court.

(IV)

LITTLE RED RIDING-HOOD

ONCE upon a time there lived in a certain village a little country girl, the prettiest creature ever seen. Her mother was excessively fond of her; and her grandmother doated on her much more. This good woman got made for her a little red riding-hood; which became the girl so exceedingly well that everybody called her Little Red Riding-Hood.

One day her mother, having made some custards, said to her: "Go, my dear, and see how thy grandmamma does, for I hear she has been very ill; carry her a custard and a little pot of butter." Little Red Riding-Hood set out immediately to go to her grandmother, who lived in another village. As she was going through the wood she met with Gaffer Wolf, who had a very great mind to eat her up, but he durst not because of some faggot-makers hard by in the forest.

He asked her whither she was going: the poor child, who did not know that it was dangerous to stay and hear a Wolf talk, said to him: "I am going to see my grandmamma, and carry her a custard and a little pot of butter from my mamma." "Does she live far off?" said the Wolf. "Oh! ay," answered Little Red Riding-Hood, "it is beyond that mill you see there, at the first house in the village." "Well," said the Wolf, "and I'll go and see her too; and I'll go this way, and go you that, and we shall see who will bé there the soonest."

The Wolf began to run as fast as he could, taking the nearest way; and the little girl went by that farthest about, diverting herself in gathering nuts, running after butterflies, and making nosegays of such flowers as she met with. The Wolf was not long before he got to the old woman's house. He knocked at the door, tap, tap. "Who's there?"

"Your grandchild, Little Red Riding-Hood," replied the Wolf, counterfeiting her voice, "who has brought you a custard, and a little pot of butter, sent you by mamma."

The good grandmother, who was in bed, because she found herself somewhat ill, cried out: "Pull the bobbin and the latch will go up." The Wolf pulled the bobbin and the door opened, and then presently he fell upon the good woman and ate her up in a moment; for it was above three days that he had not touched a bit. He then shut the door and went into the grandmother's bed, expecting Little Red Riding-Hood, who came some time afterwards and knocked at the door, tap, tap. "Who's there?" Little Red Riding-Hood, hearing the big voice of the Wolf, was at first afraid; but believing her grandmother had got a cold and was hoarse, answered: "'Tis your grandchild, Little Red Riding-Hood, who has brought you a custard and a little pot of butter, mamma sends you." The Wolf cried out to her, softening his voice as much as he could: "Pull the bobbin and the latch will go up." Little Red Riding-Hood pulled the bobbin and the door opened.

The Wolf, seeing her come in, said to her, hiding himself under the bed-clothes: "Put the custard and the little pot of butter upon the stool, and come and lie by me." Little Red Riding-Hood undressed herself and went to bed; where, being greatly amazed to see how her grandmother looked in her night-clothes she said to her: "Grandmamma, what great arms you have got." "That is the better to hug thee, my dear." "Grandmamma, what great legs you have got!" "That is to run the better, my child." "Grandmamma, what great ears you have got!" "That is to hear the better, my child." "Grandmamma, what great eyes you have got!" "That is to see the better, my child." "Grandmamma, what great teeth you have got!" "That is to eat thee up." And saying these words, this wicked Wolf fell upon poor Little Red Riding-Hood and ate her up.

The Moral

From this short story easy we discern,
What conduct all young people ought to learn;
But above all, young growing misses fair,
Whose orient rosy blooms begin t'appear:
Who, beauties in the fragrant spring of age,
With pretty airs young hearts are apt t'engage;
Ill do they listen to all sorts of tongues,
Since some enchanted lure like Sirens' songs;
No wonder, therefore, 'tis, if overpower'd,
So many of them has the Wolf devour'd.
The Wolf, I say, for Wolves too sure there are
Of every sort, and every character.
Some of them mild and gentle-humour'd be,
Of noise and gall and rancour wholly free;
Who, tame, familiar, full of complaisance,
Ogle and leer, languish, cajole and glance;
With luring tongues and language wondrous sweet,
Follow young ladies as they walk the street,
Ev'n to their very houses, nay, beside,
And artful, tho' their true designs they hide:
Yet ah! these simpering Wolves, who does not see,
Most dang'rous and full Wolves in fact they be.

JEAN DE LA FONTAINE

(1631–1697)

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(I)

FRIAR PHILIP'S GEESE

Dedicated to the Fair Sex

(From an early translation)

Ladies,

Your numberless Charms would, in the Imagination of a Youthful Solitary, have surpassed the Beauties of the Spring, and the blushing Aurora: And had he seen them in his tender Years, he'd have preferr'd them to the dazzling Splendor of the Skies, and the lovely Prospect of the Meads. And indeed, he no sooner beheld your Charms, but he felt the Force of them; you far excell'd all other Objects, and they immediately faded in his Eye. The sight of the most magnificent Palaces no longer invited his Curiosity. In a Word, he discover'd infinite more Lustre in your Persons, than in the Jewels which adorn a Crown. This Youth had, from his Infancy, inhabited the Woods and Groves, where the winged Choristers were his only Companions, whose delightful Harmony us'd sometimes to cheer his lonely Hours: Their innocent Melody was his Sole Delight, notwithstanding he was wholly unacquainted with the Meaning of their tuneful Language. To this rural School, his Father had brought him, in his Infancy, immediately after the Death of his Mother; and the tender Babe was no sooner born, than he remov'd him from the Sight of any human Creature. And for many Years he had not the least Idea that there were any Such in the World; and

imagin'd there were no other Creatures than the Tenants of the Forest he dwelt in; such as Birds, Wolves, and others who enjoy only a sensitive Life, and are not endued with any of the rational Faculties.

The two Motives which prevail'd with his Father to Shun all human Commerce, were these following, which whether they were well or ill grounded, I shall not take upon me to determine. The first was his great Abhorrence of Mankind in general; the second, his Fear: And from the Time his dear Consort had left the World, and wing'd her Way to Heaven, he detested the Society of his Fellow-Creatures. When grown weary with the Sighs he himself vented; with his continual Moan, and the Repining of all those he met with; the Death of his better Half, made him both hate, as well as fear, the rest of her Sex; so that he resolved to turn Hermit, and to bring up his little Son in the same Way of Life. Upon this, having distributed his Wealth among the Indigent, he set out unaccompany'd, except with his Infant Son, whom he carried in his Arms, and striking down into a lonely Forest, he stops in the most solitary part of it.

The Name of this Man, as History informs us, was Philip. Here our Hermit studiously conceals an hundred Particulars from the Child; and that not from a Severity or Gloominess of Temper, but Piety; and takes the utmost Care, not to let the least Word drop from him which might intimate that there were any such Creatures in the World, as Women; or such Things as Desires or Passions, particularly that of Love. In this Solitude, he instructed his Mind in Things proportionable to his Age. Having attained his fifth Year, he taught him the Names of Flowers and Animals; talk'd to him about the little Birds they heard and saw; and would every now and then intermix these Infantine Discourses, which were very pleasing to the Child, with some Account of the Devil, who, he told him, was an ill-shap'd, hideous Creature: And indeed the first Lesson which Children are generally taught, is Fear.

Being now ten Years of Age, Things of a more deep and abstruse Nature were brought upon the Carpet, and he reveal'd to him some few Particulars relating to the other World; but not a Word about Woman; at fifteen, he taught him everything his Mind was susceptible of; gave him an Idea of the Creator of all Things, but forebore to Speak of the most lovely Part of his Works: That Topic would be unseasonable to Persons devoted to a Life of Solitude, and 'twould be idle to give them the least Notion of it.

Being now Twenty, his Father thought proper to take him with him to a neighbouring City; for the Old Man was very much oppress'd with the Infirmity of his Years, and scarce able to walk thither, to procure the Necessaries of Life; upon which, he thus argued with himself: What will my poor, dear Boy do, when I am dead? How will it be possible for him to subsist; he, who is unknown to all the World? It is not in the Nature of Wolves to be humane and charitable. Friar Philip knew, that all the Lad would inherit from him was a Wallet and a Staff, which, God knows, was but a very poor Pittance; and to these Considerations, he added that of his Extreme old Age.

There were indeed but very few People who did not give him a little Loaf; so that, had he been of a covetous Temper, he might have heap'd up considerable Wealth. He was known to all the little Children, who us'd whenever they saw him, to set up their Throats, and cry, Your Alms, your Alms, Friar Philip's a coming. In a Word, our Solitary being very much belov'd in the City, had a great number of charitable Friends there; but not one Female among them, for these he carefully avoided.

Our good Anchoret no sooner thought, that the things that he had instill'd into his Son were firmly rivetted in his Mind, than he carries him to visit such good Persons as were charitably dispos'd, and makes a Trial of Fortune. However, Tears gushed from his Eyes when he consider'd the Temptations to which the Lad would be expos'd. But

now our two Hermits are set out upon their Journey, and arrive at the City, which was magnificent and finely built, and where the King kept his Court.

Here he met with ten thousand Objects unknown to him before; when our harmless and innocent Youth, in amaze, like one who has dropt from the Clouds, cries out: What d'ye call that thing there? A Courtier, replies the Father. And those out yonder? Palaces, my Dear. These here? Statues. He was gazing on these several Objects, when some young beautiful Lasses, with piercing Eyes and exquisite Features, skudded along before him; and immediately they alone drew all his Attention. For now he no longer views the Palaces, and the other Objects he had a moment before admir'd; but, luckless Lad! is seized with another kind of Astonishment; but all in Raptures at this inchanting Sight, he cries out, What's that Father, so prettily drest? how is it called? The good old Man, who did not in the least relish this Question, answers, Child, 'tis a Bird call'd a Goose. Sweet pretty Bird! cries the Lad in the Utmost Transport, prithee sing a little; let's hear some of thy Music; could not I get a little acquainted with thee? Dear Father, I entreat you, if you love me, let us carry one of them into our Forest, I myself will feed it.

(II)

THE HUSBAND TURN'D CONFESSOR

(From an early translation)

Sir Arthur Fearless went to the Wars in Italy, in the Reign of that mighty Monarch Francis I. He behav'd so gallantly in Fight, and expos'd himself to such signal Dangers, that at last his General knighted him with great Ceremony. After this, our Chevalier was persuaded, that

the first Baron of the Realm ought to give him the Way; and accordingly he return'd, greatly improv'd in Pride and Haughtiness, to the Village in which he usually resided, where he did not find his Wife at Prayers. At his quitting the Country, he had left her alone; but at his Return he finds the good Lady in jovial Company, dancing, cap'ring, leading a merry Life, and attended by a great Number of Gallants. This did not in any ways please Sir Arthur, who revolved in his Mind what was best to be done on this Occasion:—Suppose, said he, since my leaving our Town, I shou'd have been raised to the Honour of Cuckoldom, and that of Knighthood!—This is too much by half.—I'll therefore examine the Matter, and, if possible, find out the Truth.

For this purpose, one Saint's Day, he takes it into his Head to disguise himself in a Priest's Habit, and play the Confessor. And now his Wife comes, when kneeling before him, the good Lady begins with confessing the petty Sins she had committed; but afterwards the great ones coming in their Turn, she was oblig'd to change her Note.—Father, says she, I have had Correspondence with a Gentleman, a Knight and a Priest.—Had our Husband kept his own Counsel, and not discover'd himself, the good Woman was going much farther, and would have repeated a Catalogue of Sins of a pretty moderate Length. But here our Husband interrupted her: Faithless wretch! says he; a Priest say you! why, who d'ye think you're talking to?—To my Husband, reply'd the false Creature, who got very artfully out of the Scrape.—I saw you, says she, steal into the Confessional; upon which, I suppos'd you wou'd play the Wag with me.—She continu'd,—'Tis vastly surprizing, considering how learned a Clerk you are, that you haven't yet found out the Riddle.—You have been created, as you say, a Knight; before that you were a Gentleman; and in this Habit, you are a Priest.—The Lord be prais'd for this, says the Knight.—How stupid was I, not to find it out myself!

(III)

THE COBBLER AND THE RECEIVER-GENERAL OF THE FINANCES

(From an early translation)

A COBBLER us'd to sing from Morning to Night. Wonderful it was both to see and hear him. He wou'd quaver it away gloriously, more contented than the Wise Men of Greece. Divito, his Neighbour, on the contrary, who roll'd in Gold, sung but seldom, and very rarely got a Wink of Sleep. This Man was Receiver-General of the Revenues. If Divito happen'd at any time to slumber about Day-break, the Cobbler wak'd him with his Trills, on which Occasion Divito would murmur against Providence, for not selling Sleep in Markets, as well as Provisions. Divito at last sends for the Warbler to his splendid Edifice, and says to him: Harkee, Friend Davy, pray what may you get a year?—A Year? Faith and Troth, Sir, says the facetious Cobbler with a Grin, I don't use to reckon that Way: I seldom hoard up a Penny; 'tis enough for me, if I can make both Ends meet when the Year's out; and Thanks to the Lord, I never want a Meal's Meat.—Well, but tell me then, how much you get a Day?—Why, sometimes more, sometimes less, just as it happens; the Misfortune is (otherwise I should get a comfortable Living) there are so many Holy-days in the Year: Ah! these Saints Days quite ruin us. They injure one another; and our Parson is always larding his Sermon with some new Saint.—Divito, smiling at his Simplicity, spoke thus: Davy, I'll this Moment make a King of thee. Here, take this hundred Crowns, hoard them up very carefully, till such time as you may want 'em.—The Cobbler fancied he saw all the Money that the Earth had produced within upwards of an hundred years, for the Service of Mankind. Home he goes, and in his

Cellar locks up the Money and his Mirth along with it. But now he sings no more, for his Voice forsook him the Instant he was possess'd of what causes our Anxiety. Sleep fled his Hovel; and Cares, Suspicions, and vain Alarms lodged in its stead.—All the Day long his Eye was fix'd on the Place where his Treasure lay; and when Night came, if ever a Cat made the least Noise, he fancied Grimalkin was plundering him. In short, poor Davy grew so weary of this carking Life, that he ran to the Gentleman whom now he wak'd no more.—Take back, says he, your hundred Crowns, and restore me my Songs and my Sleep.

(IV)

THE TWO COCKS

(From an early translation)

Two Cocks liv'd in the utmost Harmony, when a Hen coming among 'em, immediately War was lighted up.—

O Love! thou ruin'd'st Troy; and 'tis from Thee that the famous Quarrel arose, which rag'd with so much Fury, that the River Xanthus was tinctur'd with the Blood of even the Gods.—

Our two Cocks fought obstinately for a long time, and the Fame of the Battle spread over the whole Neighbourhood. All the crested Gentry ran to view this Spectacle. The Conqueror was rewarded with more than one beautifully-plum'd Helena. As for the vanquish'd Chanticleer, he fled, and hid himself in the inmost Part of his Recess; and there bewail'd his Glory and his Darling Mistress; his Darling, whom a Rival, swell'd with Success, possessed in his Sight. This Object daily re-inflam'd his Hatred and his Courage. He whetted his Bill, beat the Air and his Sides, and exercising himself against the Winds, arm'd

himself with a jealous Rage.—This however was quite needless.—The Victor went and perch'd upon the Roof, and there sang his Conquest, when a Vulture hearing his shrill Voice,—Adieu to his darling Mistress, and his Glory.—All this Haughtiness fell a Prey to the Vulture's Talons. In fine, his Rival (most fatal Revolution!) return'd to gallant and wanton it with the favourite Hen.

I leave the Reader to judge of the Tattle was then heard, for our Cock had a multitude of Wives.—

Fortune delights in performing signal Feats. Every insolent Victor labours at his own Destruction. We ought to distrust Fate, and to stand upon our Guard after a Conquest.

MARIE CATHERINE, COMTESSE D'AULNOY

(? 1650–1720)

FINETTE THE CINDERELLA

(Translated by Henry Roche)

There was once upon a time a king and queen who, having not understood their duty, were expelled from their kingdom. They sold their crowns to keep themselves alive; then their clothes, their linen, their lace and all their furniture, bit by bit. Second-hand dealers were tired of buying, for every day the royalties sold something more. When the king and queen were reduced to penury, the king said to his wife: "We are deprived of our kingdom and have nothing left: we must earn a livelihood for ourselves and our poor children; think over what we can do, for till now the only profession I have known is that of a king—which is easy enough."

The queen, who was quick-witted, asked him to grant her a week to consider; after which she said to him: "Sire, be not downhearted; you need only make nets with which you will catch birds and fish; when the string gets worn out, I shall spin you some more. As to our three daughters, they are downright lazy girls, who still imagine themselves grand ladies; they are proud of their noble birth: we must take them away, so far, so far, that they may never return, as it is impossible for us to satisfy their craving for rich attire."

The king shed tears when he saw that he would have to be separated from his children; he was a kind father, but the queen was mistress. He therefore agreed to all she asked,

and said: "Get up early to-morrow morning and take our daughters whithersoever you think right." While they discussed this plot the princess Finette, the youngest of the girls, listened at the keyhole; and when she had discovered what her father and mother were going to do, she went as fast as she could to a large grotto, very far off, where lived the fairy Merluche, her godmother.

Finette had taken with her two pounds of fresh butter, some eggs, milk and flour to make her godmother a delicious cake, so as to be well received by her. She was merry on starting; but the more she walked, the more tired she got; the soles of her shoes were completely worn out, and her dainty little feet were so badly grazed that it was a piteous sight. She was so tired that she sat down on the grass and wept.

A fine Spanish steed happened to pass, ready saddled and bridled. His saddle-cloth was adorned with more diamonds than would have bought three towns: when he espied the princess, he began to graze gently close to her, and bending his knees he seemed to bow to her. She at once took hold of his bridle, saying: "Dear gee-gee, would you be so kind as to carry me to my fairy godmother? You would give me much pleasure; I am so exhausted that I shall die; but if you help me in my distress, I shall give you good oats and good hay; you will have a litter of fresh straw." The horse nearly stooped to the ground before her, and the young Finette jumped on his back. Off he flew as fast as a bird. He stopped at the entrance of the grotto, as if he had known the way; indeed he did know it; for Merluche, having guessed that her godchild wished to pay her a visit, had sent her that beautiful steed. On entering the grotto she courtesied very low three times, kissed the hem of her godmother's dress, and said to her: "Good-morning, godmother, I hope you are well. I bring you butter, milk, flour and eggs to make you a fine cake like those they make in our parts."—"Be welcome, Finette," replied the fairy,

" come, let me kiss you." She kissed her twice, to Finette's great joy, for Madam Merluche was no common fairy. " Now, my godchild," she added, " I want you to be my little lady's-maid: undo my hair and comb it." The princess did this as skilfully as could be wished. " I know," said Merluche, " why you have come here: you overheard the king and queen; they would lead you far away to your destruction, a doom you are trying to escape. Here, take this ball of thread, it will never break. Tie one end to the door of your house and keep the ball in your hand When the queen has abandoned you, it will be easy for you to return home by following the thread." The princess thanked her godmother, who gave her a bag full of beautiful clothes of gold and silver tissue. She kisssed her and put her on the pretty steed, who brought her in two or three moments to the door of the little house where their majesties dwelt. " My little friend," said Finette to the horse, " you are as beautiful as good, you travel faster than the sun; I thank you for your trouble; now return to the place from whence you have come." She entered gently into the house, hid the bag under her pillow, and went to bed as if nothing had happened.

As soon as day dawned, the king awoke his wife. " Come, come, madam," he said, " get ready for the journey." She got up at once, put on her thick shoes, a short shirt, a white bodice, and took a stick. She called her eldest daughter, whose name was Fleur-d'Amour; the second's name was Belle-de-Nuit, and the third's Fine-Areille, that is why she was usually called Finette. " I dreamed last night," said the queen, " that we must go and see my sister: she will give us a fine welcome, we shall eat and laugh to our hearts' content."

Fleur-d'Amour, who hated living in a lonely place, said to her mother: " Let us go, madam, wherever you like; so long as I can walk about, it matters not to me where." The two others declared the same. They took leave of the

king, and were soon on their way. They walked so far, so far, that Fine-Oreille was in great fear not to have enough thread, as they had gone nearly a thousand leagues. She took care to walk behind her sisters, and adroitly hid the thread in the bushes.

As soon as the queen thought that her daughters would never find their way back, she entered a large wood and said to them: "My little sheep, now go to sleep; I shall be like the shepherdess watching over her flock for fear the wolf may devour it." They lay down on the grass and went to sleep. The queen left them, thinking she would never see them again. Finette closed her eyes, but did not sleep. "If I were a wicked girl," she mused, "I would be off anon and let my sisters die here, because they beat me and scratch me till I bleed; but in spite of all their naughtiness I shall not abandon them."

She awoke them and told them all she knew; they began to cry and begged her to take them with her: they promised to give her their beautiful dolls, their little silver dinner-set, their other playthings and their sweetmeats. "I know you'll do nothing of the kind," retorted Finette, "but all the same I mean to be a good sister to you." And rising she followed her thread, as did the princesses; thanks to it they arrived nearly at the same time as the queen.

When they stopped at the door, they heard the king saying: "My heart feels very sad at seeing you come back alone."—"Rubbish!" replied the queen; "our daughters gave us too much trouble."—"Still," said the king, "if you had brought back my Finette, I would not regret the others, for they love no one." A knock was heard: rat-tat-tat! "Who is there?" exclaimed the king.—"Your three daughters," they answered, "Fleur-d'Amour, Belle-de-Nuit and Fine-Oreille." The queen began to tremble. "Don't open, don't open," she cried, "it must be ghosts, never could they find their way back." The king, as much a coward as his wife, said to them: "You are deceiving me, you are not my daughters."

"But Fine-Oreille, who had her wits about her, said: "Papa, I will stoop: look at me through the cat's hole in the door, and if I am not Finette I consent to be whipped." The king looked, as she had requested, and as soon as he recognised her, he opened the door. The queen pretended to be very glad to see them again and declared she had forgotten something which she had come to fetch; of course she would have returned to them. They pretended to believe her and went up to a pretty little loft where they slept.

"Now, my sisters," said Finette, "you promised me a dolly, give it me."—"Indeed you may wait for it, you little rascal," they replied, "it's your fault if the king did not regret us." Thereupon, taking their distaffs, they beat her cruelly. After this thrashing she went to bed. Her wounds and bruises made sleep impossible and she heard the queen say to the king: "I'll take them somewhere else, still farther off, and I am sure they will never come back." Finette, aware of the plot, got up without noise to go and see her godmother again. She entered the fowl-house, caught two chickens and a fine cock, whose necks she wrung, then two young rabbits which the queen fed on cabbages, intending them for a future treat. All this she placed in a basket and left the house. She had hardly gone a league, groping her way, and almost dead with fright, when the Spanish horse came up at a gallop, snorting and neighing. She thought she was doomed and that soldiers were about to seize her. When she saw the pretty horse alone, she jumped on his back, delighted to travel so comfortably, and promptly reached her godmother's home.

After the usual salutations, she offered her the chickens, the cock and the rabbits, and asked her for her good advice. She told her the queen had sworn to carry them off to the end of the world. Merluche bid her godchild not grieve and gave her a bag full of ashes. "Keep this bag in front of you," she recommended, "and shake it as you go on; then, treading on the ashes, and when you wish to retrace

your steps, you will just have to follow the footprints. But do not bring your sisters home with you, they are too full of malice; if you do that, I shall not see you again." Finette said good-bye and left, at her godmother's bidding, with a little box containing thirty or forty millions' worth of diamonds, which she put into her pocket. The horse, who was ready, carried her back as he had done before. At daybreak the queen called the princesses. When they came she said: "The king is not very well; I dreamed last night that I must go and gather for him some flowers and herbs in a certain country where they grow to perfection; they will rejuvenate him. So let us be off at once." Fleur-d'Amour and Belle-de-Nuit, who never imagined that their mother still wished to do away with them, were sad at hearing the bad news. But they were forced to leave, and they trudged so far that there has never been so long a journey. Finette, without speaking to the others, kept behind them and strewed her ashes in fine style. The wind and rain did them no harm. The queen, persuaded that they would never find their way home, noticed one evening that her three daughters were sound asleep, and took advantage of this moment to leave them and return to her house. When day had come and Finette had made sure that her mother was not to be found, she roused her sisters. "We are alone," she said, "the queen has gone." Fleur-d'Amour and Belle-de-Nuit shed abundant tears, tore out their hair, and beat their faces with clenched fists. "Alas!" they cried, "what shall we do?" Finette, who was the best girl in the world, again had pity on her sisters. "See," she said, "what risks I am taking: when my godmother gave me the means of finding my way, she forbade me to tell you, and declared she would not see me again if I disobeyed." Belle-de-Nuit threw herself at her sister's neck and Fleur-d'Amour did the same. They caressed her so tenderly that no more was needed for them to return together to the king and queen's dwelling.

Their majesties were indeed surprised at the sight of the princesses; all night they talked about the untoward event, and the youngest, who was not nicknamed Fine-Oreille for nothing, heard them form another plot. The queen set to work the next day. Finette ran to rouse her sisters. "Alas!" she said, "we are lost: the queen is determined to take us to some lonely place where she will abandon us. It is through you that my godmother is angry with me: I dare not go to her as I have hitherto done." In their sad predicament they said to each other: "What are we to do, sister, what are we to do?" At last Belle-de-Nuit boasted: "Never mind; if old Merluche has wit, she's not the only one; we need only provide ourselves with peas and sow them along the road; thus we shall find our way home." Fleur-d'Amour thought this expedient excellent. They obtained the peas and filled their pockets with them. But Fine-Oreille instead of peas took the bag that contained the fine clothes and the little box full of diamonds, and when the queen called them to go, they were quite ready.

"Last night I dreamed," she said, "that in a country I need not name there are three handsome princes who are waiting to marry you; so I will take you there to ascertain the truth of my vision." The queen walked in front, her daughters followed strewing the peas with confidence, quite unconcerned as to finding their way. This time the queen went on farther than before. During a dark night she gave them the slip and came back to the king. Although she was done up, she was happy no longer to have so many to attend to. The three princesses awoke after having slept until eleven o'clock in the morning. Finette first became aware of the queen's absence; though she was prepared for this discovery, she could not restrain her tears, counting rather on her fairy godmother's help than on her sisters' expedient for her return. She ran to them in a fright. "The queen is gone," she cried," we must go after her at once!" "Hold your tongue, you tiresome monkey," replied Fleur-d'Amour,

" we shall find our way whenever we want to. You are nothing but an impertinent busybody." Finette dared not say a word. But when they wanted to find the way, they could see neither footprints not paths; pigeons, very plentiful in those parts, had come and eaten up the peas. They began to cry and even to scream.

After remaining without food for two days, Fleur-d'Amour said to Belle-de-Nuit: " Sister, have you nothing to eat? "—" Nothing."—She asked Finette the same question. " Neither have I a morsel," was the answer, " but I have just found an acorn." " Ah! give it me," said one. " Give it me!" said the other. Each wanted to have it. " A single acorn between us three will not satisfy our hunger," complained Finette. " We must put it in the ground, it will grow into a tree that may be able to help us." They consented, although it did not seem probable that an oak would grow up in a treeless land. One could see nothing but cabbages and lettuce, which the princesses had to eat. Had they been over-delicate, they would have perished a hundred times. They nearly always slept in the open. Every morning, every evening they went in turns to water the acorn, saying to it: " Grow, grow, beautiful acorn." It began to grow rapidly. When the sapling had become fairly tall, Fleur-d'Amour tried to climb it; but it was not strong enough to bear her: she felt it bend and down she came. Belle-de-Nuit also had a fall. Finette, who was lighter, remained up a long time and her sisters asked her: " Do you not see anything, sister? "—" Nothing," she replied.—" Ah! 'tis because the oak is not yet high enough," said Fleur-d'Amour. So they went on watering the acorn and repeating: " Grow, grow, beautiful acorn." Finette never failed to climb up twice a day.

One morning, while she was up aloft, Belle-de-Nuit said to Fleur-d'Amour: " I have found a bag which our sister kept hidden from us: what may it contain? "—" She told me," confided Fleur-d'Amour, " that it contained some old lace

that she was mending."—" I believe there are some sweetmeats," added Belle-de-Nuit. As she had a sweet tooth, she looked into the bag and there she found all the king and queen's lace, under which were hidden Finette's fine clothes and the box full of diamonds. " There ! " she exclaimed, " can you imagine a worse little rogue? Let us take all that for ourselves and put stones instead." This was promptly done. Finette did not perceive her sisters' trick, for she never thought of adorning herself in a lonely place ; she cared for nothing but the oak, which was becoming the finest of all oaks. When on one occasion she climbed up it and her sisters inquired as usual if she could discover anything, she cried out: " I can see a large castle, more beautiful, more beautiful than I can say: the walls are all of emeralds and rubies, the roof is of diamonds, and all covered with bells of gold, the weathercocks are turning round as the wind blows."—" You lie," they retorted, " it is not as beautiful as you pretend."—" Believe me," exclaimed Finette, " I hate telling lies; come and see for yourselves, my eyes are quite dazzled." Fleur-d'Amour went up the tree. When she had had a look, she could not find words to describe this splendid castle. Belle-de-Nuit, who was very inquisitive, did not fail to climb up in her turn and was as enraptured as her sisters. " We must certainly go to this palace," they said. " We may find handsome princes there, who will only be too glad to marry us." During the whole evening they spoke of nothing but their project. Then they lay down on the grass for the night. But when Finette appeared to be sound asleep, Fleur-d'Amour whispered to Belle-de-Nuit: " Do you know what we must do, sister? Let us get up and don the rich attire brought by Finette."—" Right you are ! " agreed Belle-de-Nuit. They arose, coiled up their curls, powdered and patched their faces, and dressed themselves in the gorgeous gold and silver robes all covered with diamonds. Anything more splendid had never been beheld.

Finette had no idea of her wicked sisters' theft: on opening her bag in order to get dressed, she found, to her dismay, nothing but stones. And then she perceived her sisters glittering like two suns. She cried at being thus betrayed; but they only laughed and jeered. "Have you the heart," she lamented, "to take me to the castle without any adornment to make myself pretty?"—"We have only just enough for ourselves," snorted Fleur-d'Amour; "a beating is all you will get if you bother us."—"But," she protested, "the clothes you have on are mine; my godmother gave them to me, you have no right to them."—"If you go on like that we'll thrash you dead and bury you secretly." Poor Finette took care not to exasperate them; she followed them quietly, walking a little behind just as if she were their maid.

The nearer they approached the castle, the more wonderful it appeared. "Ah!" said Fleur-d'Amour and Belle-de-Nuit, "what fun we shall have! What feasts we shall enjoy! We shall sit at the king's table; but Finette will wash plates in the kitchen, for she looks like a scullion, and if we are asked who she is, let us beware of calling her our sister: we must say she is the little village cow-keeper." Finette, who was as witty as she was beautiful, was in despair at being so badly treated. On reaching the castle door, they knocked: a frightful old hag opened it. She had but one eye in the middle of her forehead; it was bigger than five or six ordinary eyes; her nose was flat, her complexion dark, and her mouth so horrible that it terrified one; she was fifteen feet in height and thirty in girth. "Oh! you unfortunate girls, who has brought you here?" she cried. "Know you not that this is the ogre's castle and that you would just make him a breakfast? But I am better than my husband; come in, I shall not eat you immediately; you shall have the consolation of living two or three days longer." On hearing these words of the ogress, they ran away in the hope of saving themselves; but one of her strides equalled fifty of theirs; she pursued and caught them by

the hair or the scruff of their necks, and putting them under her arm, she threw them all three into the cellar, which was full of toads and adders; one only trod on the bones of victims the ogre had devoured.

As she wanted to crunch Finette at once, she went to get vinegar, oil and salt to eat her as a salad; but she heard the ogre's steps, and judging that the princesses had white and delicate skins, she determined to eat them by herself, and promptly hid them under a large vat where they could only see through a hole.

The ogre was six times as tall as his wife; when he spoke, the castle trembled, and when he coughed, it sounded like peals of thunder; he had only one large and hideous eye; his hair stood on end; he leaned on a log which he used as a walking-stick. He held in his hand a covered basket, out of which he took fifteen little children he had stolen on the highways, and swallowed them like fifteen new-laid eggs. When the three princesses espied him, they trembled under the vat, and dared not cry but gently for fear of being heard by him. They whispered to one another: "He will eat us alive; what can save us?"—"Do you know," said the ogre to his wife, "I smell fresh flesh: I command you to give it me."—"You're out of it there," replied the ogress, "you're always thinking you smell fresh flesh; 'tis your sheep that have just passed."—"Oh! 'tis no mistake, I'm sure I smell fresh flesh, and I'm going to look everywhere for it."—"You may," she replied, "and you won't find any."—"If I do," growled the ogre, "and you have hidden it, I shall cut off your head and use it to play at bowls." This threat terrified her. "Don't be angry," she said, "my dear little ogre, and I will tell you the truth. This very day arrived at the castle three girlies whom I have caught. 'Twould be a pity to eat them as they are clever at all sorts of work. I am old and need rest: you know that our beautiful castle is very dirty, that our bread is badly baked, that you find the soup less tasty, and that I no longer appear

to you as pretty since I wear myself out with work: they shall be my maids. I beg of you not to eat them now; if some day you fancy them, you will be quite at liberty to do so." The ogre found it hard to promise not to swallow them there and then. He said: "Leave me alone, I'll only eat two."—"No, you shall not."—"Well then, I shall only eat the youngest."—"No, you shall not eat one," she cried. At last, after a long squabble, he promised not to eat them. Meanwhile she thought to herself: "When he goes a-hunting, I shall eat them and tell him they have escaped."

The ogre left the cellar and told her to bring the damsels. They were half dead with fright, but the ogress reassured them. Looking at them he asked what work they could do. They answered they could sweep, sew and spin to perfection; they could make such tasty stews that people ate even the dishes; as for bread, cakes and pies, folks came from a thousand leagues roundabout to buy them. At this the dainty ogre exclaimed: "Come, come, let us set these perfect servants to work. But," he said, addressing Finette, "when you have heated the oven, how can you tell that it is hot enough?"—"My lord," she replied, "I throw butter into the oven and then I taste it with my tongue."—"Well," said he, "light the fire." The oven was as large as a stable, for the ogre and ogress ate more bread than two armies. The princess lit a tremendous fire: the oven glowed like a furnace, and the ogre who stood there, waiting for the new bread, devoured a hundred lambs and a hundred sucking-pigs. Fleur-d'Amour and Belle-de-Nuit prepared the dough. "Now then," cried the masterly ogre, "is the oven hot?"—"My lord," replied Finette, "you shall see." In his presence she threw a thousand pounds of butter far into the oven and said: "I ought to lick it with my tongue, but I am too small."—"I'm big enough," retorted the ogre, and stooping, he sunk in so far that he could not get out again and was burnt to his very bones. When the ogress came to the oven she was dismayed at finding a

mound of ashes—all that remained of her husband's bones. Fleur-d'Amour and Belle-de-Nuit at the sight of her great affliction did their best to console her; but as they feared that her grief might subside too quickly and that, her appetite returning, she might make a salad of them, as she had thought of doing before, they said to her: "Take courage, madam, you will find a king or a marquis who will be happy to wed you." The ogress smiled a little, showing teeth of more than a finger's length. When they saw her in a good humour, Finette said to her: "If you would take off the horrible bearskins you wear and dress according to the fashion, we would do up your hair to perfection and make you look like a star."—"Well," she replied, "you may have your way; but be quite sure that if I see any ladies prettier than myself, I shall cut you up as fine as mincemeat." Thereupon the three princesses took off her cap and began to comb and curl her hair, amusing her with their prattle. Finette suddenly seized an axe and struck her such a blow from behind that the ogress's head was severed from her body.

Never was there such an explosion of joy! They went up on the roof of the castle and had great fun in making the golden bells ring; they visited all the rooms, which glittered with pearls and diamonds; the richness of the furniture delighted them in the extreme; they laughed and danced; they had of everything in plenty—corn, jam, fruit and an abundance of dolls. Fleur-d'Amour and Belle-de-Nuit lay in beds of brocade and velvet and said to each other: "Now we are richer than our father when he possessed his kingdom; only one thing is wanting—to get ourselves husbands. Nobody will come here, for this castle must be known as a cut-throat place. No one has heard of the death of the ogre and ogress; we must betake ourselves to the nearest town and show ourselves in our splendid attire; we shall not be there long ere we find rich financiers who will be glad to marry princesses."

As soon as they were dressed they told Finette they were going for a walk; she was to remain there to do the housework and the washing; they were to find everything tidy and clean on their return; if she failed in this, they would beat her to death. Poor Finette, whose heart was torn with grief, remained alone at home, sweeping, cleaning, washing without rest, and always in tears. "How unfortunate I am," she wailed, "to have disobeyed my godmother! 'Tis the cause of all the ills that befall me: my sisters have stolen my rich attire, which now adorns them. Had it not been for me, the ogre and ogress would still enjoy good health. What advantage is it to me to have killed them? Would it not have been as well if they had eaten me, considering the life I have to lead?" Having spoken these words, she cried bitter tears. Late at night her sisters came home loaded with oranges from Portugal, jam and sugar. They said, to tease her: "Ah! what a lovely ball we've been to! How many guests were there! The king's son danced; we were many times honoured. Now come and take off our shoes and wipe off the mud, for that is your business." Finette obeyed; and if she happened to utter the least complaint, they rushed at her and nearly beat her to death. Next day, on their return from court, they again teased her with their wonderful account of events. One evening while Finette sat near the fire on a heap of ashes, having nothing better to do, she ferreted in the cracks in the chimney, and in doing so she discovered a tiny key, so old and so grimy that she had the greatest trouble to get it clean; and then she saw that it was of gold. "A gold key," she mused, "must open some pretty little casket." She at once began to run about the whole castle, trying the key in every lock. At last she found a casket which was a miracle of art. She opened it: it contained clothes, diamonds, lace, linen and ribbons of untold value. This lucky find she kept to herself, and she waited with impatience for her sister's departure the next day. As soon as they had disappeared,

she bedecked herself with such splendour that she was more beautiful than sun or moon.

In this attire she appeared at the ball where her sisters danced; and although she wore no mask, she had so changed for the better that they did not know her again. As soon as she entered the room there arose on all sides murmurs of admiration or jealousy. Partners came to engage her; she surpassed all the ladies in dancing as she eclipsed them in beauty. The hostess advanced towards her, and having made a deep courtesy, she asked her to tell her name, in order that she might never forget such an admirable person. Finette answered civilly that she was called Cinderella. Every lover present forgot his mistress for Cinderella; every poet found rhymes for Cinderella; never did a nickname become so famous in so short a time; echo repeated Cinderella's praise; no one had eyes enough to gaze at her, nor mouths enough to praise her.

Fleur-d'Amour and Belle-de-Nuit, who had made quite a stir wherever they appeared, on seeing the welcome afforded to the new-comer, fumed with spite. Meanwhile Finette behaved with the utmost grace: her manner was that of one born to command. Fleur-d'Amour and Belle-de-Nuit, who never saw their sister but with soot on her face and covered with more mud than a cur, had so far forgotten her beauty that they did not recognize her, and like all others paid court to Cinderella.

Seeing that the ball was nearing its end, Finette slipped away hurriedly, returned to the castle, undressed in haste and donned her ragged clothes. "Ah! Finette," exclaimed her sisters on arriving," we have just seen a young and most charming princess; she is not an ugly monkey like you, but as white as the snow and rosier than the rose; her teeth are like pearls, her lips like coral; her dress, all gold and diamonds, must weigh more than a thousand pounds. How lovely and amiable she is!" Finette muttered between her teeth: "Thus was I, thus was I."—"What does this

muttering mean?" said they. Finette went on in a lower tone: "Thus was I." These scenes were often repeated. Nearly every day Finette put on a fresh dress, for her fairy casket, the more it gave the more it filled up again. So fashionable was her attire that ladies took it for their model.

One evening when Finette had danced more than usual, and she had delayed her return till rather late, in order to make up for lost time and reach home before her sisters, she walked as fast as she could. One of her slippers fell off: it was of red velvet embroidered with pearls. She did all she could to find it, but so great was the darkness that her efforts proved useless, and she came home with one foot in its slipper and the other foot bare.

Next day Prince Chéri, eldest son of the king, on going to the hunt perceived Finette's slipper. He ordered it to be picked up, looked at it, admired its smallness and daintiness, turned it over and over, kissed it, cherished it and kept it. From that day he lost all appetite; he became thin and changed, as yellow as a quince, sad and downcast. The king and queen, who loved him passionately, sent to all parts for rich-flavoured game and jam; all this to him was less than nothing, he looked at it without answering the queen when she spoke to him. Doctors were summoned from all parts, even from Paris and Montpellier. When they arrived they were led to the prince. After studying him for three days and three nights without losing sight of him a single moment, they came to the conclusion that he was in love and that he would die if a remedy were not found.

The queen, who loved him fondly, was all tears at not being able to discover the object of his passion, so that he could wed his lady-love. She brought to his room the most beautiful ladies; he did not deign to notice them. As a last resource she said to him: "My son, you wish to kill us with grief, for you are in love and hide your feelings from us. Tell your parents who it is you must have and we shall give our consent, were she but a simple shepherdess." The

prince, emboldened by the queen's promises, took the slipper from under his pillow, and showing it to her declared: "This, madam, is the cause of my sickness: I found this dainty, pretty, sweet little slipper as I was going to the hunt; I shall only wed the lady whose foot it will fit."—"Well then, my son," said the queen, "grieve no longer, we shall have her sought for." She took the news to the king, who remained some time greatly surprised. He then commanded that damsels and women should be summoned to court in order to try on the slipper, and moreover that the lady it fitted was to marry the prince. Each one, on being apprised of what was at stake, anointed her feet with all kinds of sweet waters, pastes and pomatums. Some had their feet scalded to obtain a finer skin; others fasted or nearly rubbed the skin off, to get their feet smaller. Although crowds came to try on the slipper, not one could get it on; and the more they made the attempt in vain, the greater became the prince's grief.

Fleur-d'Amour and Belle-de-Nuit one day made themselves so smart that you would not believe it. "Where are you going?" inquired Finette.—"We are off to the great town, where the king and queen reside, to try on the slipper which the king's son has picked up; for if it fits one of us two, he will marry her and she will be a queen."—"And I," said Finette, "shall I not go?"—"Indeed!" they sneered, "you silly simpleton, go, go and water our cabbages, you are not fit for anything else."

Finette immediately determined to put on her best attire and try her luck as well as the others, for she had a tiny suspicion that she had a good chance. Her only cause for anxiety was that she did not know the way: this ball was not to take place in the great town. Magnificent was her robe of blue satin all covered with stars and diamonds; her hair was as bright as the sun; on her back shone a full moon; her apparel was so dazzling that those who looked at her had half to close their eyes. On opening the door to go

forth, she was astonished to see the handsome Spanish steed who had carried her to her godmother's. She patted him and said: "You are welcome, my little friend, I am grateful to my godmother Merluche." He stooped to her: she got up and sat in the saddle like a nymph. The steed was all bedecked with little bells of gold and ribbons; the saddle-cloth and bridle were of priceless value. Finette's beauty was thrice as great as that of Helen of Troy.

Lightly stepped the Spanish steed, his bells ringing, ding, ding, ding. Fleur-d'Amour and Belle-de-Nuit on hearing the jingle turned round and beheld her coming. Great was their surprise when they beheld Finette the Cinderella. They were very muddy. "Highnesses," said Finette with a laugh, "Cinderella despises you as you deserve." She left them and flew off like an arrow. Belle-de-Nuit and Fleur-d'Amour looked at one another: "Is it a dream?" they said. "Who has provided Finette with such clothes and such a horse? Marvellous! Fortune favours her, the slipper will fit her foot, and we for our trouble shall have made a useless journey."

While they gave themselves up to despair, Finette arrived at the palace. As soon as she appeared she was taken for a queen. The guard presented arms, the drums and trumpets sounded, all doors were thrown open and all those who had seen her at the ball preceded her, saying: "Make room, make room for the lovely Cinderella, the wonder of the world!" In the midst of this pomp she entered the dying prince's chamber. He cast his look upon her and remained as under a charm, hoping that her foot was small enough to get into the slipper. She drew it on without any effort and showed them the fellow one, which she had brought on purpose. Meanwhile the spectators shouted: "Long live the princess Chéri! Long live the princess who is to be our queen!" The prince rose from his couch and advanced to kiss her hands; she found him both handsome and gifted; he on his part showed himself most attentive. The king and

queen, apprised of all this, hurried to the prince's chamber. The queen took Finette in her arms, calling her her beloved daughter, her little queen. She offered her some splendid presents which were only surpassed by those which the generous king bestowed on her. Cannon roared, violins, bagpipes and all sorts of instruments made music; dancing and rejoicing were the universal theme. The king, the queen and the prince begged of Cinderella to consent to the marriage. "No," she said, "I must first tell you my story." This she did in a few words. When they heard that she was a princess by birth, their joy was increased a hundredfold, they could have died of happiness. But when she told them the names of the king, her father, and of the queen, her mother, they realized whose kingdom they had conquered and told Finette all. She swore never to consent to the marriage unless her father's dominions were restored to him: They promised to restore them; as they reigned over more than a hundred kingdoms, one less was of slight consequence.

Meantime Belle-de-Nuit and Fleur-d'Amour arrived. The first thing they heard was that Cinderella had put on the slipper, and they knew not what to say or do. They wanted to go away without seeing her; but she, being apprised of their arrival, ordered that they were to appear. Instead of turning them a cold shoulder and punishing them as they deserved, she rose, went towards them, and kissed them tenderly. Then she presented them to the queen with these words: "Madam, these are my sisters, who are most amiable; I beg of you to love them." Finette's goodness so bewildered them that they could not utter a word. She promised that they would return to their kingdom, which the king intended to restore to their parents. At these words they threw themselves on their knees before her, tears of joy bathing their faces.

The wedding was the finest ever seen. Finette wrote to her godmother, committing the letter, with rich gifts, to the care of the handsome Spanish steed. She asked her to

visit the king and queen, her parents, to tell them of her happiness and of the coming restoration of their kingdom. The fairy Merluche acquitted herself perfectly of this commission. Finette's father and mother recovered their dominions and her sisters became queens also.

If for ingratitude thou wouldst take vengeance,
Good Finette's mercy try to imitate,
For kindness and beneficence
Of real avengers play the part
By torturing the ungrateful heart.
Belle-de-Nuit and Fleur-d'Amour
Were punished with far greater rigour
When she on them her bounty poured
Than if the ogre had these wicked girls devoured.
Practise whene'er you can her gentle art:
Remember in thy animosity
That little Finette's noble heart
Was best avenged by generosity.

FRANÇOIS MARIE AROUET DE VOLTAIRE

(1694–1778)

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(I)

THE VISION OF BABOUC[1]

AMONG the genii who preside over the empires of the earth, Ithuriel held one of the first ranks, and had the department of Upper Asia. He one morning descended into the abode of Babouc, the Scythian, who dwelt on the banks of the Oxus, and said to him: "Babouc, the follies and vices of the Persians have drawn upon them our indignation; yesterday was held an assembly of the genii of Upper Asia to consider whether we would chastise Persepolis, or destroy it entirely. Go to that city; examine everything; return and give me a faithful account; and, according to thy report, I will then determine whether to correct or extirpate the inhabitants." "But, my lord," said Babouc with great humility, "I have never been in Persia, nor do I know a single person in that country." "So much the better," said the angel, "thou wilt be the more impartial; thou hast received from heaven the spirit of discernment, to which I now add the power of inspiring confidence. Go, see, hear, observe, and fear nothing; thou shalt everywhere meet with a favourable reception."

Babouc mounted his camel, and set out with his servants. After having travelled some days, he met, near the plains of Senaar, the Persian army, which was going to attack the forces of India. He first addressed himself to a soldier, whom

[1] This appears to be a satire on the city of Paris.

he found at a distance from the main army; and asked him what was the occasion of the war. "By all the gods," said the soldier, "I know nothing of the matter. It is none of my business; my trade is to kill and be killed, to get a livelihood. It is of no consequence to me whom I serve. To-morrow, perhaps, I may go over to the Indian camp; for it is said that they give their soldiers nearly half a copper drachma a day more than we have in this cursed service of Persia: if thou desirest to know why we fight, speak to my captain."

Babouc, having given the soldier a small present, entered the camp. He soon became acquainted with the captain, and asked him the subject of the war. "How canst thou imagine that I should know it?" said the captain, "or of what importance is it to me? I live about two hundred leagues from Persepolis; I hear that war is declared; I instantly leave my family, and, having nothing else to do, go, according to our custom, to raise my fortune, or to fall by a glorious death." "But are not thy companions," said Babouc, "a little better informed than thee?" "No," said the officer, "there are none but our principal satrapes that know the true cause of our cutting one another's throats."

Babouc, struck with astonishment, introduced himself to the generals, and soon became familiarly acquainted with them. At last one of them said: "The cause of this war, which for twenty years past hath desolated Asia, sprang originally from a quarrel between a eunuch belonging to one of the concubines of the great king of Persia, and the clerk of a factory belonging to the great king of India. The dispute was about a claim, which amounted nearly to the thirtieth part of a daric. Our first minister and that of India maintained the rights of their masters with becoming dignity: the dispute grew warm: both parties sent into the field an army of a million of soldiers. This army must be every year recruited with upwards of four hundred thousand

men. Massacres, burning of houses, ruin and devastation are daily multiplied; the universe suffers; and their mutual animosity still continues. The first ministers of the two nations frequently protest that they have nothing in view but the happiness of mankind; and every protestation is attended with the destruction of a town, or the desolation of a province." [1]

Next day, on a report being spread that peace was going to be concluded, the Persian and Indian generals made haste to come to an engagement. The battle was long and bloody. Babouc beheld every crime, and every abomination: he was witness to the arts and stratagems of the principal satrapes, who did all that lay in their power to expose their general to the disgrace of a defeat. He saw officers killed by their own troops, and soldiers stabbing their already expiring comrades in order to strip them of a few bloody garments, torn and covered with dirt. He entered the hospitals, to which they were conveying the wounded, most of whom died through the inhuman negligence of those who were well paid by the king of Persia to assist these unhappy men. "Are these men," cried Babouc, "or are they wild beasts? Ah! I plainly see that Persepolis will be destroyed."

Full of this thought, he went over to the camp of the Indians, where, according to the prediction of the genii, he was as well received as in that of the Persians; but he saw there the very same crimes which had already filled him with horror. "Oh," said he to himself, "if the angel Ithuriel should exterminate the Persians, the angel of India must certainly destroy the Indians." But being afterwards more particularly informed of all that passed in both armies, he heard of such acts of generosity, humanity, and greatness of soul as at once surprised and charmed him: "Unaccountable mortals! as ye are," cried he, "how can you

[1] Such indeed are the trifling causes which often produce horror, misery, and devastation.

thus unite so much baseness and so much grandeur, so many virtues and so many vices!"

Meanwhile the peace was proclaimed; and the generals of the two armies, neither of whom had gained a complete victory, but who, for their own private interest, had shed the blood of so many of their fellow-creatures, went to solicit their courts for rewards. The peace was celebrated in public writings, which announced the return of virtue and happiness to the earth. "God be praised," said Babouc, "Persepolis will now be the abode of spotless innocence, and will not be destroyed, as the cruel genii intended. Let us haste without delay to this capital of Asia."

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He entered that immense city by the ancient gate, which was entirely barbarous, and offended the eye by its disagreeable rusticity. All that part of the town savoured of the time when it was built; for, notwithstanding the obstinacy of men, in praising ancient at the expense of modern times, it must be owned that the first essays in every art are rude and unfinished.

Babouc mingled in a crowd of people, composed of the most nasty and deformed of both sexes, who were thronging with a stupid air into a large and gloomy enclosure. By the constant hum; by the gestures of the people; by the money which some persons gave to others for the liberty of sitting down, he imagined that he was in a market, where chairs were sold; but observing several women fall down on their knees, with an appearance of looking directly before them, while in reality they were leering at the men by their sides, he was soon convinced that he was in a temple. Shrill, hoarse, savage, and discordant voices made the vault re-echo with ill-articulated sounds that produced the same effect as the braying of wild asses, when, in the plains of Pictavia, they answer the cornet that calls them together. He stopped his ears; but he was ready to shut his eyes and hold his nose when he saw several labourers enter into the

temple with crows and spades, who removed a large stone, and threw up the earth on both sides, from whence exhaled a pestilential vapour: at last some others approached, deposited a dead body in the opening, and replaced the stone upon it. "What!" cried Babouc, "do these people bury their dead in the place where they adore the Deity? What! are their temples paved with carcases? I am no longer surprised at those pestilential diseases [1] that frequently depopulate Persepolis. The putrefaction of the dead, and the infected breath of such numbers of the living, assembled and crowded together in the same place, are sufficient to poison the whole terrestrial globe. Oh! what an abominable city is Persepolis! The angels probably intend to destroy it in order to build a more beautiful one in its place, and to people it with inhabitants who are more virtuous and better singers. Providence may have its reasons for so doing; to its disposal let us leave all future events."

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Meanwhile the sun approached his meridian height. Babouc was to dine at the other end of the city with a lady, for whom her husband, an officer in the army, had given him some letters; but he first took several turns in Persepolis, where he saw other temples, better built and more richly adorned, filled with a polite audience, and resounding with harmonious music; he beheld public fountains, which, though ill-placed, struck the eye by their beauty; squares where the best kings that had governed Persia seemed to breathe in bronze, and others where he heard the people crying out: "When shall we see our beloved master?"

[1] Indeed one would imagine that the European churches, especially in this kingdom, had been contrived in order to disgust the people and deter them from public worship. The chilling dampness which reigns in every church, especially in the winter, is not more pernicious to the health than the earthy cadaverous smell is to the sense; and the eye is entertained with a variety of funeral epitaphs and ornaments which cannot fail to excite superstitious horror in minds naturally susceptible of gloomy impressions.

He admired the magnificent bridges built over the river; the superb and commodious quays; the palaces raised on both sides; and an immense house, where thousands of old soldiers, covered with scars and crowned with victory, offered their daily praises to the god of armies.[1] At last he entered the house of the lady who, with a set of fashionable people, waited his company to dinner. The house was neat and elegant; the repast delicious; the lady young, beautiful, witty, and engaging; and the company worthy of her; and Babouc every moment said to himself: "The angel Ithuriel has little regard for the world, or he would never think of destroying such a charming city."

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In the meantime he observed that the lady, who had begun by tenderly asking news about her husband, spoke still more tenderly to a young magi towards the conclusion of the repast. He saw a magistrate, who, in presence of his wife, paid his court with great vivacity to a widow, while that indulgent widow had one arm around the magistrate's neck, and held out her other hand to a young citizen, remarkable for his modesty and graceful appearance. The magistrate's wife rose first from table, to go to converse in an adjoining closet with her director, who came too late, and for whom they had waited dinner; and the director, a man of great eloquence, spoke to her with such vehemency and holy zeal that when she returned her eyes were humid, her cheeks inflamed, her gait irregular, and her voice trembling.

Babouc then began to fear that the genius Ithuriel had but too much reason. The talent he possessed of gaining confidence let him that same day into all the secrets of the lady. She confessed to him her affection for the young

[1] We perceive our author has an eye to the celebrated fountain on the Pont Neuf, the Place des Victoires, the two great bridges over the Seine, with the stone quays on each side, the palace of the Louvre, and the hospital for invalids.

magi, assured him that in all the houses in Persepolis he would meet with much the same behaviour as he had found in hers. Babouc concluded that such a society could not possibly subsist; that jealousy, discord, and vengeance must desolate every house; that tears and blood must be daily shed; that the husbands must certainly kill the gallants of the wives, or be killed by them; and, in fine, that Ithuriel would do well to destroy immediately a city abandoned to continual disasters.

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Such were the gloomy ideas that possessed his mind, when a grave man in a black gown appeared at the gate, and humbly begged to speak to the young magistrate. This stripling, without rising or taking the least notice of the old gentleman, gave him some papers, with a haughty and careless air, and then dismissed him. Babouc asked who this man was. The mistress of the house said to him in a low voice, "He is one of the best advocates in the city, and hath studied the law these fifty years. The other, who is but twenty-five years of age, and has only been a satrape of the law for two days, hath ordered him to make an extract of a process he is going to determine, though he has not as yet examined it." "This giddy youth acts wisely," said Babouc, "in asking counsel of an old man. But why is not the old man himself the judge?" "Thou art surely in jest," said they; "those who have grown old in laborious and inferior posts are never raised to places of dignity. This young man has a great post, because his father is rich; and the right of dispensing justice is purchased here like a farm." "O manners! O unhappy city!" cried Babouc, "this is the height of anarchy and confusion. Those who have thus purchased the right of judging will doubtless sell their judgments; nothing do I see here but an abyss of iniquity."

While he was thus expressing his grief and surprise, a young warrior, who that very day had returned from the

army, said to him, "Why wouldest thou not have seats in the courts of justice to be purchased? I myself purchased the right of braving death at the head of two thousand men, who are under my command: it has this year cost me forty thousand darics of gold to lie on the earth thirty nights successively in a red dress, and at last to receive two wounds with an arrow, of which I still feel the smart. If I ruin myself to serve the emperor of Persia, whom I never saw, the satrape of the law may well pay something for enjoying the pleasure of giving audience to pleaders." Babouc was filled with indignation, and could not help condemning a country where the highest posts in the army and the law were exposed to sale. He at once concluded that the inhabitants must be entirely ignorant of the art of war and the laws of equity; and that though Ithuriel should not destroy them, they must soon be ruined by their detestable administration.

He was still further confirmed in his bad opinion by the arrival of a fat man, who, after saluting all the company with great familiarity, went up to the young officer, and said, "I can only lend thee fifty thousand darics of gold; for indeed the taxes of the empire have this year brought me in but three hundred thousand." Babouc inquired into the character of this man, who complained of having gained so little, and was informed that in Persepolis there were forty plebeian kings, who held the empire of Persia by lease, and paid a small tribute to the monarch.[1]

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After dinner he went into one of the most superb temples in the city, and seated himself amidst a crowd of men and women, who were come thither to pass away the time. A magi appeared in a machine elevated above the heads of the people, and talked a long time of vice and virtue. He

[1] These are the farmers-general of France, who were suffered to amass vast fortunes by fleecing the people in consideration of supplying the Government.

divided into several parts what needed no division at all: he proved methodically what was sufficiently clear, and he taught what everybody knew; he threw himself into a passion with great composure, and went away sweating, and out of breath. The assembly then awoke, and imagined they had been present at a very instructive discourse. Babouc said, "This man has done his best to tire two or three hundred of his fellow-citizens; but his intention was good; and there is nothing in this that should occasion the destruction of Persepolis."

Upon leaving the assembly, he was conducted to a public entertainment, which was exhibited every day in the year. It was in a kind of great hall, at the end of which appeared a palace. The most beautiful women in Persepolis and the most considerable satrapes were ranged in order, and formed so fine a spectacle that Babouc at first believed that this was all the entertainment. Two or three persons, who seemed to be kings and queens, soon appeared in the vestibule of their palace. Their language was very different from that of the people; it was measured, harmonious, and sublime. Nobody slept. The audience kept a profound silence, which was only interrupted by expressions of sensibility and admiration. The duty of kings, the love of virtue, and the dangers arising from unbridled passions were all described by such lively and affecting strokes that Babouc shed tears. He doubted not but that these heroes and heroines, these kings and queens whom he had just heard, were the preachers of the empire: he even purposed to engage Ithuriel to come and hear them, confident that such a spectacle would for ever reconcile him to the city.

As soon as the entertainment was finished, he resolved to visit the principal queen, who had recommended such pure and noble morals in the palace. He desired to be introduced to her majesty, and was led up a narrow staircase to an ill-furnished apartment in the second storey, where he found a woman in a mean dress, who said to him with a

noble and pathetic air, "This employment does not afford me a sufficient maintenance; one of the princes whom thou sawest has got me with child; I shall soon be brought to bed; I want money, and without money there is no lying in." Babouc gave her a hundred darics of gold, saying, "Had there been no other evil in the city but this, Ithuriel would have been to blame for being so much offended."

From thence he went to spend the evening at the house of a tradesman who dealt in magnificent trifles. He was conducted thither by a man of sense, with whom he had contracted an acquaintance. He bought whatever pleased his fancy; and the toyman with great politeness sold him everything for more than it was worth. On his return home his friend showed him how much he had been cheated. Babouc set down the name of the tradesman in his pocket-book in order to point him out to Ithuriel as the object of peculiar vengeance on the day when the city should be punished. As he was writing, he heard somebody knock at the door: this was the toyman himself, who came to restore him his purse, which he had left by mistake on the counter. "How canst thou," cried Babouc, "be so generous and faithful, when thou hast had the assurance to sell me these trifles for four times their value?" "There is not a tradesman," replied the merchant, "of ever so little note in the city that would not have returned thee thy purse; but whoever said that I sold thee these trifles for four times their value is greatly mistaken: I sold them for ten times their value; and this is so true that wert thou to sell them again in a month hence, thou wouldst not get even this tenth part. But nothing is more just, it is the variable fancies of men that set a value on these baubles; it is this fancy that maintains a hundred workmen whom I employ; it is this that gives me a fine house and a handsome chariot and horses; it is this, in fine, that excites industry, encourages taste, promotes circulation, and produces abundance.

"I sell the same trifles to the neighbouring nation at a

much higher rate than I have sold them to thee, and by these means I am useful to the empire." Babouc, after having reflected a moment, erased the tradesman's name from his tablets.

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Babouc, not knowing as yet what to think of Persepolis, resolved to visit the magi and the men of letters; for, as the one studied wisdom and the other religion, he hoped that they in conjunction would obtain mercy for the rest of the people. Accordingly, he went next morning into a college of magi. The archimandrite confessed to him that he had a hundred thousand crowns a year for having taken the vow of poverty, and that he enjoyed a very extensive empire in virtue of his vow of humility; after which he left him with an inferior brother, who did him the honours of the place.

While the brother was showing him the magnificence of this house of penitence, a report was spread abroad that Babouc was come to reform all these houses. He immediately received petitions from each of them, the substance of which was, "Preserve us and destroy all the rest." On hearing their apologies all these societies were absolutely necessary: on hearing their mutual accusations they all deserved to be abolished. He was surprised to find that all the members of these societies were so extremely desirous of edifying the world that they wished to have it entirely under their dominion.

Soon after appeared a little man, who was a demi-magi, and who said to him, "I plainly see that the work is going to be accomplished; for Zerdust is returned to earth; and the little girls prophesy, pinching themselves before, and whipping themselves behind. We therefore implore thy protection against the great lama." "What!" said Babouc, "against the royal pontiff, who resides at Tibet?" "Yes, against him himself." "What! you are then making war upon him, and raising armies!" "No, but he says that

man is a free agent, and we deny it. We have wrote several pamphlets against him, which he never read; hardly has he heard our name mentioned; he hath only condemned us in the same manner as a man orders the trees in his garden to be cleared from caterpillars." Babouc was incensed at the folly of these men who made profession of wisdom; and at the intrigues of those who had renounced the world; and at the ambition, pride, and avarice of such as taught humility and a disinterested spirit; from all which he concluded that Ithuriel had good reason to destroy the whole race.

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On his return home he sent for some new books to alleviate his grief, and, in order to exhilarate his spirits, invited some men of letters to dine with him; when, like wasps attracted by a pot of honey, there came twice as many as he desired. These parasites were equally eager to eat and to speak; they praised two sorts of persons, the dead and themselves; but none of their contemporaries except the master of the house. If any of them happened to drop a smart and witty expression, the rest cast down their eyes and bit their lips out of mere vexation that it had not been said by themselves. They had less dissimulation than the magi, because they had not such grand objects of ambition. Each of them behaved at once with all the meanness of a valet and all the dignity of a great man. They said to each other's face the most insulting things, which they took for strokes of wit. They had some knowledge of the design of Babouc's commission; one of them entreated him in a low voice to extirpate an author who had not praised him sufficiently about five years before; another requested the ruin of a citizen who had never laughed at his comedies; and a third demanded the destruction of the academy because he had not been able to get admitted into it. The repast being ended, each of them departed by himself; for in the whole crowd there were not two men that could endure the company or conversation of each other except at the

houses of the rich who invited them to their tables. Babouc thought that it would be no great loss to the public if all these vermin were destroyed in the general catastrophe.

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Having now got rid of these men of letters, he began to read some new books, where he discovered the true spirit by which his guests had been actuated. He observed with particular indignation those slanderous gazettes, those archives of bad taste, dictated by envy, baseness, and hunger; those ungenerous satires, where the vulture is treated with lenity, and the dove torn in pieces; and those dry and insipid romances, filled with characters of women to whom the author was an utter stranger.

All these detestable writings he committed to the flames, and went to pass the evening in walking. In this excursion he was introduced to an old man possessed of great learning, who had not come to increase the number of his parasites. This man of letters always fled from crowds; he understood human nature, availed himself of his knowledge, and imparted it to others with great discretion.—Babouc told him how much he was grieved at what he had seen and read.

"Thou hast read very despicable performances," said the man of letters; "but in all times, in all countries, and in all kinds of literature, the bad swarm and the good are rare. Thou hast received into thy house the very dregs of pedantry; for, in all professions, those who are least worthy of appearing are always sure to present themselves with the greatest impudence. The truly wise live among themselves in retirement and tranquillity; and we have still some men and some books worthy of thy attention." While he was thus speaking, they were joined by another man of letters; and the conversation became so entertaining and instructive, so elevated above vulgar prejudices, and so conformable to virtue, that Babouc acknowledged he had never heard the like. "These are men," said he to himself, "whom the

angel Ithuriel will not presume to touch, or he must be a merciless being indeed."

Though reconciled to men of letters, he was still enraged against the rest of the nation. "Thou art a stranger," said the judicious person who was talking to him; "abuses present themselves to thy eyes in crowds, while the good, which lies concealed, and which is even sometimes the result of these very abuses, escapes thy observation." He then learned that among men of letters there were some who were free from envy; and that even among the magi themselves there were some men of virtue. In fine, he concluded that these great bodies, which, by their mutual shocks, seemed to threaten their common ruin, were at bottom very salutary institutions; that each society of magi was a check upon its rivals; and that though these rivals might differ in some speculative points, they all taught the same morals, instructed the people, and lived in subjection to the laws, not unlike to those preceptors who watch over the heir of a family, while the master of the house watches over them. He conversed with several of these magi, and found them possessed of exalted souls. He likewise learned that even among the fools who pretended to make war on the great lama, there had been some men of distinguished merit; and, from all these particulars, he conjectured that it might be with the manners of Persepolis as it was with the buildings; some of which moved his pity, while others filled him with admiration.

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He said to the man of letters: "I plainly see that these magi, whom I at first imagined to be so dangerous, are, in reality, extremely useful; especially when a wise Government hinders them from rendering themselves too necessary; but thou wilt at least acknowledge that your young magistrates who purchase the office of a judge as soon as they can mount a horse must display in their tribunals the most ridiculous impertinence and the most iniquitous perverseness.

It would doubtless be better to give these places gratuitously to those old civilians who have spent their lives in the study of the law."

The man of letters replied, "Thou hast seen our army before thy arrival at Persepolis; thou knowest that our young officers fight with great bravery, though they buy their posts; perhaps thou wilt find that our young magistrates do not give wrong decisions, though they purchase the right of dispensing justice."

He led him next day to the grand tribunal, where an affair of great importance was to be decided. The cause was known to all the world. All the old advocates that spoke on the subject were wavering and unsettled in their opinions: they quoted a hundred laws, none of which were applicable to the question. They considered the matter in a hundred different lights, but never in its true point of view. The judges were more quick in their decision than the advocates in raising doubts. They were unanimous in their sentiments; they decided justly, because they followed the light of reason. The others reasoned falsely, because they only consulted their books.

Babouc concluded that the best things frequently arose from abuses. He saw the same day that the riches of the receivers of the public revenue, at which he had been so much offended, were capable of producing an excellent effect; for the emperor having occasion for money, he found in an hour by their means what he could not have procured in six months by the ordinary methods. He saw that those great clouds, swelled with the dews of the earth, restored in plentiful showers what they had thence derived. Besides, the children of these new gentlemen, who were frequently better educated than those of the most ancient families, were sometimes more useful members of society; for he whose father hath been a good accomptant may easily become a good judge, a brave warrior, and an able statesman.

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Babouc was insensibly brought to excuse the avarice of the farmer of the revenues, who in reality was not more avaricious than other men, and besides was extremely necessary. He overlooked the folly of those who ruined themselves in order to obtain a post in the law or army; a folly that produces great magistrates and heroes. He forgave the envy of men of letters, among whom there were some that enlightened the world; and he was reconciled to the ambitious and intriguing magi, who were possessed of more great virtues than little vices. But he had still many causes of complaint. The gallantries of the ladies especially, and the fatal effects which these must necessarily produce, filled him with fear and terror.

As he was desirous of prying into the characters of men of every condition, he went to wait on a minister of State; but trembled all the way, lest some wife should be assassinated by her husband in his presence. Having arrived at the statesman's, he was obliged to remain two hours in the antechamber before his name was sent in, and two hours more after that was done. In this interval he resolved to recommend to the angel Ithuriel both the minister and his insolent porters. The antechamber was filled with ladies of every rank, magi of all colours, judges, merchants, officers, and pedants; and all of them complained of the minister. The miser and the usurer said, "Doubtless this man plunders the provinces." The capricious reproached him with fickleness; the voluptuary said, "He thinks of nothing but his pleasure." The factious hoped to see him soon ruined by a cabal; and the women flattered themselves that they should soon have a younger minister.

Babouc heard their conversation, and could not help saying, "This is surely a happy man; he hath all his enemies in his antechamber; he crushes with his power those that envy his grandeur; he beholds those who detest him grovelling at his feet." At length he was admitted into the presence-chamber, where he saw a little old man

bending under the weight of years and business, but still lively and full of spirits.

The minister was pleased with Babouc, and to Babouc he appeared to be a man of great merit. The conversation became interesting. The minister confessed that he was very unhappy; that he passed for rich, while in reality he was poor; that he was believed to be all-powerful, and yet was constantly contradicted; that he had obliged none but a parcel of ungrateful wretches; and that, in the course of forty years' labour, he had hardly enjoyed a moment's rest. Babouc was moved with his misfortunes; and thought that if this man had been guilty of some faults, and Ithuriel had a mind to punish him, he ought not to cut him off, but to leave him in possession of his place.

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While Babouc was talking to the minister, the beautiful lady with whom he had dined entered hastily, her eyes and her forehead discovering the symptoms of grief and indignation. She burst into reproaches against the statesman; she shed tears; she complained bitterly that her husband had been refused a place to which his birth allowed him to aspire, and which he had fully merited by his wounds and his service; she expressed herself with such force; she uttered her complaints with such a graceful air; she overthrew objections with so much address, and enforced her arguments with so much eloquence that she did not leave the chamber till she had made her husband's fortune.

Babouc gave her his hand, and said, "Is it possible, madam, that thou canst take so much pains to serve a man whom thou dost not love, and from whom thou hast everything to fear?" "A man whom I do not love!" cried she; "know, sir, that my husband is the best friend I have in the world; that there is nothing I would not sacrifice for him, except my lover; and that he would do anything for me, except that of leaving his mistress. I must introduce you to her acquaintance; she is a charming woman,

sprightly, and sweet-tempered; we sup together this very night with my husband and my little magi; come and share our joy."

The lady conducted Babouc to her own house. The husband, who was at last arrived, overwhelmed with grief, received his wife with transports of joy and gratitude. He embraced by turns his wife, his mistress, the little magi, and Babouc. Wit, harmony, cheerfulness, and all the graces embellished the repast. "Know," said the lady with whom he supped, "that those who are sometimes called dishonest women have almost always the merit of very honest men; and to convince thee of this, I invite thee to dine with me to-morrow at the beautiful Theona's. There are some old vestals that tear her character in pieces; but she does more good than all of them together. She would not commit the least act of injustice to gain the greatest advantage; she gives the most generous advice to her lover; she consults only his glory; and he would blush before her, should he let slip any opportunity of doing good; for nothing can more effectually excite a man to the performance of virtuous actions than to have for the witness and judge of his conduct a mistress whose esteem he wishes to deserve."

Babouc did not fail to keep the appointment. He saw a house where all the pleasures seemed to reign, with Theona at the head of them, who well knew how to preserve the most perfect order. Her easy wit made all around her happy; she pleased almost without intending to do so; she was as amiable as beneficent; and, what enhanced the merit of all her good qualities, she was a beauty.

Babouc, though a Scythian, and sent by a genii, found, that should he continue much longer in Persepolis, he would forget Ithuriel for Theona. He began to grow fond of a city the inhabitants of which were polite, affable, and beneficent, though fickle, slanderous, and vain. He was much afraid that Persepolis would be condemned. He was even afraid to give in his account.

This, however, he did in the following manner: he caused a little statue, composed of all kinds of metals, of earth, and stones the most precious and the most vile, to be cast by one of the best founders in the city, and carried it to Ithuriel. "Wilt thou break," said he, "this pretty statue because it is not wholly composed of gold and diamonds?" Ithuriel immediately understood his meaning, and resolved to think no more of punishing Persepolis, but to leave "The world as it goes." "For," said he, "if all is not well, all is passable." Thus Persepolis was suffered to remain; nor did Babouc complain like Jonas, who was so highly incensed at the preservation of Nineveh. But when a man has been three days in a whale's belly, he cannot be supposed to be in so good a humour as when he has been at an opera or a comedy, and hath supped with good company.

(II)

THE BLACK AND THE WHITE

THE adventure of the youthful Rustan is generally known throughout the whole province of Candahar. He was the only son of a mirza of that country: the title of Mirza there is much the same as that of Marquis amongst us, or that of Baron amongst the Germans. The mirza his father had a handsome fortune. Young Rustan was to be married to a mirzasse, or young lady of his own rank; the two families earnestly desired their union. Rustan was to become the comfort of his parents, to make his wife happy, and to live blest in her possession.

But he had unfortunately seen the princess of Cachemire at the fair of Kaboul, which is the most considerable fair in the world, and much more frequented than those of Bassora and Astracan: the occasion that brought the old prince of Cachemire to the fair with his daughter was as follows:

He had lost the two most precious curiosities of his treasury; one of them was a diamond as thick as a man's thumb, upon which the figure of his daughter was engraved by an art which was then possessed by the Indians, and has since been lost; the other was a javelin, which went of itself wherever its owner thought proper to send it: this is nothing very extraordinary amongst us, but it was thought so at Cachemire.

A faquir belonging to his highness stole these two curiosities; he carried them to the princess: "Keep these two curiosities with the utmost care," said he, "your destiny depends upon them." Having spoke thus, he departed, and was not afterwards seen. The duke of Cachemire, in despair, resolved to visit the fair of Kaboul, in order to see whether there might not, amongst the merchants, who go thither from all the quarters of the world, be someone possessed of his diamond and his weapon. He carried his daughter with him in all his travels. She carried her diamond well fastened to her girdle; but the javelin, which she could not so easily hide, she had carefully locked up at Cachemire in a large chest.

Rustan and she saw each other at Kaboul; they loved one another with all the sincerity of persons of their age, and all the tenderness of affection natural to those of their country. The princess gave Rustan her diamond as a pledge of her love, and he promised at his departure to go incognito to Cachemire, in order to pay her a visit.

The young mirza had two favourites, who served him as secretaries, grooms, stewards, and valets de chambre; the name of one was Topaze; he was handsome, well-shaped, fair as a Circassian beauty, as mild and ready to serve as an Armenian, and as wise as a Guebra. The name of the other was Ebene; he was a very beautiful negro, more active and industrious than Topaze, and one that thought nothing difficult. The young mirza communicated his intention of travelling to these. Topaze endeavoured to

dissuade him from it with the circumspect zeal of a servant who was unwilling to offend him; he represented to him the great danger to which he exposed himself; he asked him how he could leave two families in despair? how he could pierce the hearts of his parents? He shook the resolution of Rustan; but Ebene confirmed it anew, and obviated all his objections.

The young man was not furnished with money to defray the charge of so long a voyage; the prudent Topaze would not have lent him any; Ebene supplied him; he with great address stole his master's diamond, made a false one exactly like it, which he put in its place, and pledged the true one to an Armenian for several thousand roupees.

As soon as the marquis was possessed of his roupees, all things were in readiness for his departure; an elephant was loaden with his baggage, his attendants mounted on horseback. Topaze said to his master, "I have taken the liberty to expostulate with you upon your enterprise, but, after expostulating, it is my duty to obey; I am devoted to you, I love you, I will follow you to the extremity of the earth; but let us by the way consult the oracle that is but two parasonges distant from here." Rustan consented. The answer returned by the oracle was, "If you go to the east you will be at the west." Rustan could not guess the meaning of this answer. Topaze maintained that it boded no good. Ebene, always complaisant to his master, persuaded him that it was highly favourable.

There was another oracle at Kaboul; they went to it; the oracle of Kaboul made answer in these words: "If you possess, you will cease to possess; if you are conqueror, you will not conquer; if you are Rustan, you will cease to be so." This oracle appeared still more unintelligible than the former. "Take care of yourself," said Topaze: "Fear nothing," said Ebene; and this minister, as may well be imagined, was always thought in the right by his master, whose passions and hopes he encouraged. Having left

Kaboul, they passed through a vast forest; they seated themselves upon the grass, in order to take a repast, and left their horses grazing. The attendants were preparing to unload the elephant which carried the dinner, the table, cloth, plates, etc., when, all on a sudden, Topaze and Ebene were perceived by the little caravan to be missing. They were called, the forest resounded with the names of Topaze and Ebene; the lacquies sought them on every side, and filled the forest with their cries; they returned without having seen anything, and without having received any answer. "We have," said they to Rustan, "found nothing but a vulture that fought with an eagle, and stript it of all its feathers." The mention of this combat excited the curiosity of Rustan; he went on foot to the place, he perceived neither vulture nor eagle; but he saw his elephant, which was still loaden with baggage, attacked by a huge rhinoceros: one struck with its horn, the other with its proboscis. The rhinoceros desisted upon seeing Rustan; his elephant was brought back, but his horses were not to be found. "Strange things happen in forests to travellers," cried Rustan. The servants were in great consternation, and the master in despair, for having at once lost his horses, his dear negro, and the wise Topaze, for whom he still had a friendship, though he always differed from him in opinion.

The hopes of being soon at the feet of the beauteous princess of Cachemire consoled the mirza, when he met with a huge streaked ass, which a vigorous two-handed country clown beat with an oaken cudgel. The asses of this sort are extremely beautiful, very scarce, and beyond expression swift in running. The ass returned the reiterated blows of the clown by kicks which might have rooted up an oak. The young mirza, as was reasonable, took upon him the defence of the ass, which was a charming creature. The clown betook himself to flight, crying to the ass, "You shall pay for this."

The ass thanked her deliverer in her own language,

approached him, let herself be caressed, and caressed him in her turn. After dinner, Rustan mounted her, and took the road to Cachemire with his servants, who followed him some on foot and some upon the elephant. Scarce was he got upon his ass, when that animal turned towards Kaboul instead of proceeding to Cachemire. It was to no purpose for her master to turn the bridle, to kick, to press the sides of the beast with his knees, to spur, to slacken the bridle, to pull towards him, to whip both on the right and the left, the obstinate animal persisted to run towards Kaboul.

Rustan sweated, fretted, and raved, when he met with a dealer in camels, who said to him, "Master, you have got a very malicious beast, which carries you where you do not choose to go; if you will give it to me, I will give you the choice of four of my camels." Rustan thanked providence for having thrown so good a bargain in his way. "Topaze was very much in the wrong," said he, "to tell me that my journey would prove unprosperous." He mounted the handsomest camel, the other three followed; he rejoined his caravan, and saw himself on the road to his happiness.

Scarce had he walked four parasangs when he was stopped by a deep, broad, and impetuous torrent, which rolled upon rocks white with foam; the two banks were frightful precipices, which dazzled the sight and made the blood run cold: to pass was impracticable; it was impossible to go to the right or the left. "I am beginning to be afraid," said Rustan, "that Topaze was in the right in blaming my journey, and that I was in the wrong in undertaking it; if he were still here he might give me good advice; if I had Ebene with me, he would comfort me and find expedients; but everything fails me." This perplexity was increased by the consternation of his attendants: the night was dark, and they passed it in lamentations. At last fatigue and dejection made the amorous traveller fall asleep. He awoke at daybreak, and saw a beautiful

marble bridge built upon the torrent, which reached from shore to shore.

Nothing was heard but exclamations, cries of astonishment, and joy. Is it possible? Is this a dream? What a prodigy is this! What an enchantment! Shall we venture to pass? The whole company kneeled, rose up, went to the bridge, kissed the ground, looked up to heaven, stretched out their hands, set their feet on it with trembling, went to and fro, fell into ecstasies; and Rustan said, "At last heaven favours me; Topaze did not know what he was saying; oracles were favourable to me; Ebene was in the right, but why is he not here?"

Scarce had the company got beyond the torrent when the bridge sunk into the water with a prodigious noise. "So much the better, so much the better," cried Rustan, "praised be God, blessed be heaven; it would not have me return to my country, where I should be nothing more than a gentleman; the intention of heaven is, that I should wed her I love; I shall become prince of Cachemire; thus in 'possessing' my mistress I shall cease to 'possess' my little marquisate at Candahar. 'I shall be Rustan, and I shall not be Rustan,' because I shall become a great prince: thus is a great part of the oracle clearly explained in my favour, the rest will be explained in the same manner. I am too happy: but why is not Ebene with me? I regret him a thousand times more than Topaze."

He proceeded a few parasangs farther with the greatest alacrity imaginable; but at the close of day, a chain of mountains, more rugged than a counterscarp, and higher than the Tower of Babel would have been if it had been finished, stopped the passage of the caravan, which was seized with dread.

All the company cried out, "It is the will of God that we perish here; he broke the bridge merely to take from us all hopes of returning; he raised the mountain for no other reason but to deprive us of all means of advancing.

Oh, Rustan! oh, unhappy marquis! we shall never see Cachemire; we shall never return to the land of Candahar."

The most poignant anguish, the most insupportable dejection, succeeded in the soul of Rustan to the immoderate joy which he had felt, to the hopes with which he had intoxicated himself. He was by no means disposed to interpret the prophecies in his favour. "Oh, heavens! oh, God of my fathers!" said he, "must I then lose my friend Topaze!"

As he pronounced these words, fetching deep sighs, and shedding tears in the midst of his disconsolate followers, the basis of the mountain opened, a long gallery appeared to the dazzled eyes in a vault lighted with a hundred thousand torches: Rustan immediately began to lament, and his people to throw themselves upon their knees, and to fall upon their backs in astonishment, and cry out, "A miracle!" and say, "Rustan is the favourite of Witsnow, the well-beloved of Brahma; he will become the master of mankind." Rustan believed it, he was quite beside himself, he was raised above himself. "Alas, Ebene," said he, "my dear Ebene, where are you? Why are you not witness of all these wonders? How did I lose you? Beauteous princess of Cachemire, when shall I again behold your charms?"

He advanced with his attendants, his elephants, and his camels, under the hollow of the mountain; at the end of which he entered into a meadow enamelled with flowers and encompassed with rivulets: at the extremity of the meadows were walks of trees to the end of which the eye could not reach, and at the end of these alleys was a river, on the sides of which were a thousand pleasure houses with delicious gardens. He everywhere heard concerts of vocal and instrumental music; he saw dances; he made haste to go upon one of the bridges of the river; he asked the first man he met what fine country that was?

He whom he addressed himself to, answered, "You are in the province of Cachemire; you see the inhabitants

immersed in joy and pleasures; we celebrate the marriage of our beauteous princess, who is going to be married to the lord Barbabou, to whom his father promised her; may God perpetuate their felicity!" At these words Rustan fainted away, and the Cachemirian lord thought he was troubled with the falling sickness; he caused him to be carried to his house, where he remained a long time insensible. He sent in search of the two most able physicians in that part of the country: they felt the patient's pulse, who, having somewhat recovered his spirits, sobbed, rolled his eyes, and cried from time to time, "Topaze, Topaze, you were entirely in the right!"

One of the two physicians said to the Cachemirian lord, "I perceive, by this young man's accent, that he is from Candahar, and that the air of this country is hurtful to him; he must be sent home: I perceive by his eyes that he has lost his senses; entrust me with him, I will carry him back to his own country, and cure him." The other physician maintained that grief was his only disorder; and that it was proper to carry him to the wedding of the princess, and make him dance. Whilst they were in consultation, the patient recovered his health; the two physicians were dismissed, and Rustan remained alone with his host.

"My lord," said he, "I ask your pardon for having been so free as to faint in your presence; I know it to be a breach of politeness; I intreat you to accept of my elephant as an acknowledgment of the kindness you have showed me." He then related to him all his adventure, taking particular care to conceal from him the occasion of his journey. "But, in the name of Witsnow and Brahma," said he to him, "tell me who is this happy Barbabou who is to marry the princess of Cachemire; why has her father chosen him for his son-in-law, and why has the princess accepted of him for a husband?"

"Sir," answered the Cachemirian, "the princess has by no means accepted of Barbabou; she is, on the contrary,

in tears, whilst the whole province joyfully celebrates her marriage: she has shut herself up in a tower of her palace; she does not chose to see any of the rejoicings made upon the occasion." Rustan, at hearing this, perceived himself revive; the bloom of his complexion, which grief had caused to fade, appeared again upon his countenance. "Tell me, I intreat you," continued he, "why the prince of Cachemire is obstinately bent upon giving his daughter to a Barbabou whom she does not like?"

"This is the fact," answered the Cachemirian. "Do you know that our august prince lost a large diamond and a javelin which he had a great value for?" "Ah! I very well know that," said Rustan. "Know then," said his host, "that our prince being in despair at not having heard of his two precious curiosities, after having caused them to be sought for all over the world, promised his daughter to whoever should bring him either the one or the other: a lord Barbabou came, who had got the diamond, and he is to marry the princess to-morrow."

Rustan turned pale, stammered out a compliment, took his leave of his host, and galloped upon his dromedary to the capital city, where the ceremony was performed. He arrived at the palace of the prince, he told him he has something of importance to communicate to him, he demanded an audience; he was told that the prince was taken up with the preparations for the wedding. "It is for that very reason," said he, "that I am desirous of speaking to him." Such was his importunity, that he was at last admitted. "Prince," said he, "may God crown all your days with glory and magnificence! your son-in-law is a knave."

"What! a knave! how dare you speak in such terms? Is that a proper way of speaking to a duke of Cachemire of a son-in-law whom he has made choice of?" "Yes, he is a knave," continued Rustan; "and to prove it to your Highness, I have brought you back your diamond."

The duke, surprised at what he heard, compared the

two diamonds; and as he was no judge of precious stones, he could not determine which was the true one. "Here are two diamonds," said he, "and I have but one daughter; I am in a strange perplexity."

He sent for Barbabou, and asked him if he had not imposed upon him. Barbabou swore he had bought his diamond from an Armenian: the other did not tell him who he had his from; but he proposed an expedient, which was, that his Highness would please to permit him to engage his rival in single combat. "It is not enough for your son-in-law to give a diamond," said he, "he should also give proofs of valour. Do not you think it just that he who kills his rival should marry the princess?" "Undoubtedly," answered the prince; "it will be a fine sight for the court; fight directly: the conqueror shall take the arms of the conquered, according to the custom of Cachemire, and he shall marry my daughter."

The two pretenders to the princess immediately went down into the court. Upon the stairs there was a pie and a raven; the raven cried, "Fight, fight;" the pie cried, "Don't fight." This made the prince laugh; the two rivals scarce took any notice of it; they began the combat; all the courtiers made a circle round them. The princess, who kept herself constantly shut up in her tower, did not chose to behold this sight; she never dreamt of her lover being at Cachemire, and she hated Barbabou to such a degree that she could not bear the sight of him. The combat had the happiest event imaginable; Barbabou was killed outright; and this greatly rejoiced the people, because he was ugly, and Rustan was very handsome; the favour of the public is almost always determined by this circumstance.

The conqueror put on the coat of mail, scarf, and the casque of the conquered, and came, followed by the whole court, to present himself under the windows of his mistress. The multitude cried aloud, "Beautiful princess, come and see your handsome lover, who has killed his ugly rival."

These words were echoed by her women. The princess unluckily looked out of the window, and seeing the armour of a man she hated, she ran like one frantic to her strong box, and took out the fatal javelin, which flew to pierce Rustan, notwithstanding his cuirass: he cried out loudly, and at this cry the princess thought she again knew the voice of her unhappy lover.

She ran downstairs, with her hair dishevelled, and death in her eyes as well as her heart. Rustan had already fallen, all bloody, into the arms of his father: she saw him. Oh, moment! oh, sight! oh, discovery of inexpressible grief, tenderness, and horror! She threw herself upon him, and embraced him. "You receive," said she, "the first and last kisses of your mistress and your murderer." She pulled the dart from the wound, plunged it in her heart, and died upon the body of the lover whom she adored. The father, terrified, in despair, and ready to die like his daughter, tried in vain to bring her to life; she was no more: he cursed the fatal dart, broke it to pieces, threw away the two fatal diamonds; and whilst he prepared the funeral of his daughter instead of her marriage, he caused Rustan, who weltered in his blood, and had still some remains of life, to be carried to his palace.

He was put into bed: the first objects he saw on each side of his death-bed were Topaze and Ebene. This surprise made him in some degree recover his strength. "Cruel men," said he, "why did you abandon me? Perhaps the princess would still be alive if you had been with the unhappy Rustan." "I have not forsaken you a moment," said Topaze: "I have been always with you," said Ebene. "Ah! what do you say? why do you insult me in my last moments?" answered Rustan with a languishing voice. "You may believe me," said Topaze; "you know I never approved of this fatal journey, the dreadful consequences of which I foresaw. I was the eagle that fought with the vulture and stript it of its feathers; I was the elephant that

carried away the baggage, in order to force you to return to your own country; I was the streaked ass that carried you, whether you would or no, to your father; it was I that made your horses go astray; it was I that caused the torrent that prevented your passage; it was I that raised the mountain which stopped up a road so fatal to you: I was the physician that advised you to return to your own country; I was the pie that cried out to you not to fight."

"And I," said Ebene, "was the vulture that he stript of his feathers, the rhinoceros who gave him a hundred strokes with my horn, the clown that beat the streaked ass, the merchant who made you a present of camels to hasten to your destruction; I dug the cavern that you crossed, I am the physician that encouraged you to walk, the raven that cried out to you to combat."

"Alas!" said Topaze, "remember the oracles: 'If you go to the east you will be at the west.'" "Yes," said Ebene, "here the dead are buried with their faces turned to the west: the oracle was plain enough, though you did not understand it. 'You possessed and you did not possess;' for you had the diamond, but it was a false one, though you did not know it. 'You are conqueror and you die, you are Rustan and you cease to be so;' all has been accomplished." Whilst he spoke thus, four white wings covered the body of Topaze, and four black wings that of Ebene. "What do I see!" cried Rustan. Topaze and Ebene answered together, "You see your two geniuses." "Good gentlemen," cried the unhappy Rustan, "how came you to meddle? and what occasion had a poor man for two geniuses?" "It is a law," answered Topaze; "every man has two geniuses. Plato was the first man that said so, and others have repeated it after him; you see that nothing can be more true: I, who now speak to you, am your good genius; I was charged to watch over you to the last moment of your life; of this task I have faithfully acquitted myself."

"But," said the dying man, "if your business was to

serve me, I am of a nature much superior to yours; and then how can you have the assurance to say you are my good genius, since you have suffered me to be deceived in everything I have undertaken, and since you suffer both my mistress and me to die miserably?" "Alas!" said Topaze, "it was your destiny." "If destiny does all," answered the dying man, "what is a genius good for? And you, Ebene, with your four black wings, you are, doubtless, my evil genius." "You have hit it," answered Ebene. "Then I suppose you were the evil genius of my princess likewise," said Rustan. "No," replied Ebene, "she had an evil genius of her own, and I seconded him perfectly." "Ah, curst Ebene!" said Rustan, "if you are so malicious, you don't belong to the same master with Topaze: you have been formed by two different principles, one of which is by nature good, the other evil." "That does not follow," said Ebene; "this is a very knotty point." "It is not possible," answered the dying man, "that a benevolent being could create so destructive a genius." "Possible or not possible," replied the genius, "the thing is just as I say." "Alas," said Topaze, "my poor unfortunate friend, don't you see that that rogue is so malicious as to encourage you to dispute, in order to inflame your blood and hasten your death?" "Get you gone," said the melancholy Rustan, "I am not much better satisfied with you than with him: he at least acknowledges that it was his intention to hurt me; and you, who pretended to defend me, have done me no service at all." "I am very sorry for it," said the good genius. "And I too," said the dying man; "there is something at the bottom of this which I cannot comprehend." "Nor I neither," said the good genius. "I shall know the truth of the matter in a moment," said Rustan. "We shall see that," said Topaze. The whole scene then vanished. Rustan again found himself in the house of his father, which he had not quitted, and in his bed, where he had slept an hour.

He awoke in astonishment, sweating all over, and quite wild; he rubbed himself, he called, he rang the bell. His valet de chambre, Topaze, ran in, in his nightcap, and yawning. "Am I dead or alive," cried out Rustan; "shall the beauteous princess of Cachemire escape?" "Does your lordship rave?" answered Topaze, coldly.

"Ah!" cried Rustan, "what then is become of this barbarous Ebene, with his four black wings? it is he that makes me die by so cruel a death." "My lord," answered Topaze, "I left him snoring above stairs; would you have me bid him come down?" "The villain," said Rustan, "has persecuted me for six months together: it was he who carried me to the fatal fair of Kaboul; it is he that cheated me of the diamond with which the princess presented me; he is the sole cause of my journey, of the death of my princess, and of the wound with a javelin, of which I die in the flower of my age."

"Take heart," said Topaze, "you were never at Kaboul; there is no princess of Cachemire; her father never had any children but two boys, who are now at college: you never had a diamond: the princess cannot be dead because she is not born; and you are perfectly well in health."

"What! is it not then true that you attended me whilst dying, and in the bed of the prince of Cachemire? Did you not acknowledge to me that, in order to preserve me from so many dangers, you were an eagle, an elephant, a streaked ass, a physician, and a pie?" "My lord, you have dreamt all this," answered Topaze: "our ideas are no more of our own creating whilst we are asleep than whilst we are awake: God has thought proper that this train of ideas should pass in your head, most probably to convey some instruction to you, of which you may make a good use."

"You make a jest of me," replied Rustan; "how long have I slept?" "My lord," said Topaze, "you have not yet slept an hour." "Curst reasoner," returned Rustan, "how is it possible that I could be, in the space of an hour,

at the fair of Kaboul six months ago, that I could have returned from thence, have travelled to Cachemire, and that Barbabou, the princess, and I should have died?" "My lord," said Topaze, "nothing can be more easy and more common; and you might have travelled round the world, and have met with a great many more adventures in much less time.

"Is it not true that you can, in an hour's time, read the abridgment of the Persian history, written by Zoroaster? yet this abridgment contains eight hundred thousand years. All these events pass before your eyes one after another, in an hour's time. Now you must acknowledge, that it is as easy to Brahma to confine them to the space of an hour, as to extend them to the space of eight hundred thousand years; it is exactly the same thing. Imagine to yourself that time turns upon a wheel whose diameter is infinite. Under this vast wheel is a numerous multitude of wheels one within another; that in the centre is imperceptible, and goes round an infinite number of times, whilst the great wheel performs but one revolution. It is evident that all the events which have happened from the beginning of the world to its end might have happened in much less time than the hundred thousandth part of a second; and one may even go so far as to assert that the thing is so."

"I cannot comprehend all this," said Rustan. "If you want information," said Topaze, "I have a parrot that will easily explain it to you. He was born some time before the Deluge; he has been in the ark; he has seen a great deal; yet he is but a year and a half old: he will relate to you his history, which is extremely interesting."

"Go fetch your parrot," said Rustan, "it will amuse me till I again find myself disposed to sleep." "It is with my sister, the nun," said Topaze; "I will go and fetch it; it will please you; its memory is faithful; it relates in a simple manner, without endeavouring to show wit at every turn." "So much the better," said Rustan, "I like that manner of

telling stories." The parrot being brought to him spoke in this manner:—

N.B.—Mademoiselle Catherine Vadé could never find the history of the parrot in the commonplace-book of her late cousin Anthony Vadé, author of that tale: this is a great misfortune, considering what age that parrot lived in.

JEAN FRANÇOIS MARMONTEL

(1723–1799)

THE CONNOISSEUR

(Translated by Leigh Hunt)

Celicour, from the age of fifteen, had been in the country what is called a little prodigy. He made the most gallant verses in the world. There was not one handsome woman in the neighbourhood whom he had not celebrated, and who had not discovered that his eyes had still more spirit than his verses. It was a pity to suffer such great talents to lie buried in a little country town. Paris ought to be their theatre, and he managed so well that his father resolved to send him there. This father was an honest man, who loved wit, without having any himself, and who admired, without knowing why, everything that came from the capital; he had even some literary relations there, and in the number of his correspondents was a Connoisseur called M. de Fintac. It was particularly to him that Celicour was recommended.

Fintac received the son of his friend with the kindness of one who takes persons under his protection. "Sir," said he, "I have heard of you. I know that you have had success in the country; but in the country, believe me, arts and sciences are yet in their infancy. Without taste, wit and genius produce nothing but what is deformed, and there is no taste but at Paris. Begin, then, by persuading yourself that you are but just born, and by forgetting all that you have learned." "What would I not forget?" said Celicour, casting his eyes on a niece of eighteen, whom the Connoisseur had with him. "Yes, sir, it is to-day that I begin to live.

I know not what charm breathes in these places; but it unfolds in me faculties unknown to me before; I seem to myself to have acquired new senses, a new soul." "Good," cried Fintac; "there now is enthusiasm; he is born a poet, and from this single stroke I warrant him one." "There is no poetry in that," replied Celicour; "it is plain and simple nature." "So much the better, there is the true talent. And at what age did you feel yourself animated with this divine fire?" "Alas, sir! I have had some sparks of it in the country, but I never experienced there this lively and sudden heat which penetrates me at this instant." "It is the air of Paris," said Fintac. "It is the air of your house," said Celicour; "I am in the temple of the Muses." The Connoisseur found that this young man had happy dispositions.

Agathe, the most beautiful little wag that love ever formed, lost not one word of this conversation; and certain sly looks, a certain smile which played on her lips, gave Celicour to understand that she did not mistake the double meaning of his replies. "I am greatly pleased with your father," added the Connoisseur, "for having sent you hither at an age when the mind is docile enough to receive right impressions; but guard yourself against bad. You will find at Paris more false connoisseurs than good judges. Do not go and consult everybody, but stick close to the instruction of a man who has never been mistaken in anything." Celicour, who did not imagine that one might praise one's self with so much openness, had the simplicity to ask who that infallible man was. "It is I, sir," replied Fintac, with a tone of confidence; "I, who have passed myself with all the artists and *literati* of greatest consideration; I, who for these forty years have exercised myself in distinguishing in things both of fancy and of taste, the real and permanent beauties, the beauties of mode and of convention. I say it, because it is well known; and there is no vanity in agreeing to a known fact."

Extraordinary as this language was, Celicour hardly paid any attention to it, he was engaged by an object more interesting. Agathe had sometimes deigned to lift up her eyes upon him, and those eyes seemed to tell him the most obliging things in the world; but was it their natural vivacity, or the pleasure of seeing their triumph, that animated them? That was a point to be cleared up. Celicour therefore begged the Connoisseur to allow him the honour of visiting him often, and Fintac himself pressed him to it.

On his second visit, the young man was obliged to wait till the Connoisseur was visible, and to pass a quarter of an hour *tête-à-tête* with the lovely niece. She made him many excuses; and he replied that there was no occasion for them. "Sir," said Agathe to him, "my uncle is charmed with you." "That is a very pleasing piece of success to me; but, madam, there is one which would touch me still more." "My uncle says you are formed to succeed in everything." "Ah! why do not you think the same?" "I am pretty often of my uncle's opinion." "Assist me, then, to merit his kindness." "You seem to me to want no assistance." "Pardon me! I know that great men have, almost all of them, their singularities, sometimes even weaknesses. To flatter their tastes, their opinions, their temper, one must know them; to know them one must study them; and, if you please, beautiful Agathe, you can abridge that study for me. After all, what is the point? To gain the good-will of your uncle! Nothing in the world is more innocent." "Is it the custom, then, in the country to come to an understanding with the nieces, in order to succeed with the uncles? That is very dexterous indeed!" "Nothing in it but what is very natural." "But if my uncle had, as you say, singularities and foibles, must I tell you of them?" "Why not? would you suspect me of wanting to make an ill use of them?" "No; but his niece——" "Very well, his niece ought to wish that one

should endeavour to please him. He is past the time of life in which we correct ourselves; nothing remains, then, but to manage him." "An admirable remover of scruples!" "Ah! you would not have any if you knew me better; but no, you have dissembled." "Truly, I see the gentleman for the second time; how can I have any secrets from him?" "I am indiscreet, I confess, and I ask your pardon." "No, it is I who have been wrong, to let you fancy the thing more serious than it is. The fact is this; my uncle is a good man, and would never have pretended to anything more, if they had not put it into his head to know everything, to judge of arts and letters, to be the guide, estimator, and arbiter of talents. That hurts nobody, but it draws a crowd of blockheads to our house, whom my uncle protects, and with whom he shares the ridicule of being a wit. It were much to be wished, for his own ease, that he would abandon this chimera; for the public seem to have made it their business never to be of his opinion, and we have every day some new scene." "You afflict me." "You are now in possession of all the secrets of the family, and we have nothing more to conceal from you." Just as she finished, word was brought to Celicour that the Connoisseur was visible.

The study into which he was introduced announced the multiplicity of his studies and the variety of his knowledge; the floor was covered with folios, piled up on one another in the utmost confusion; rolls of prints, maps lying open, and manuscripts jumbled together; on a table, a *Tacitus* open near a sepulchral lamp surrounded by antique medals; farther off, a telescope on its carriage, the sketch of a picture on the easel, a model of bas-relief in wax, scraps of natural history; and in the fretwork of the ceiling a representation of books picturesquely overturned. The young man knew not where to set his foot, and his embarrassment gave the Connoisseur infinite pleasure. "Forgive," said he to him, "the confusion in which you find me. This is my study;

I have occasion for all these things at hand; but do not imagine that the same disorder reigns in my head; everything there is in its place; the variety, nay, the number itself causes no confusion there." "Wonderful!" said Celicour, who knew not what he said, for his thoughts were still on Agathe. "Oh, very wonderful!" replied Fintac, "and I am often surprised myself when I reflect on the mechanism of the memory, and the manner in which the ideas class and arrange themselves as fast as they arise; it seems as if there were drawers for every different kind of knowledge. For example, across that multitude of things which had passed through my imagination, who will explain to me how I came to retrace in my memory, to a given point, what I had read formerly on the return of the comet?—for you are to know that it was I who gave the watchword to our astronomers." "You, sir?" "They never thought of it; and but for me the comet had passed incognito over our horizon. I have not boasted of it, as you may plainly see; I tell it you in confidence." "And why suffer yourself to be deprived of the glory of so important a piece of intelligence?" "Good! I should never have done if I were to lay claim to all that they steal from me. In general, my lad, take it for granted that a solution, a discovery, a piece of poetry, of painting, or of eloquence, belong not, so much as it is imagined, to the person who takes the credit of it to himself. But what is the object of a Connoisseur? To encourage talents at the same time that he enlightens them. Whether the thought of this bas-relief, the disposition of this picture, the beauties of the parts, or the whole, of this play, be the artist's or mine, is matter of indifference to the progress of the art; now that is all my concern. They come, I tell them my thought; they listen to me, they make their advantage of it. It is excellent. I am recompensed when they have succeeded." "Nothing finer," said Celicour; "the arts ought to regard you as their Apollo. And does Mademoiselle Agathe condescend to be also their Muse?"

"No, my niece is a madcap, whom I wanted to bring up with care; but she has no taste for study. I had engaged her to cast her eye over history: she returned me my books, saying that it was not worth while to read for the sake of seeing in all ages illustrious madmen and rogues sporting with a crowd of fools. I wanted to try if she had a greater taste for eloquence: she pretended that Cicero, Demosthenes, etc., were only dexterous jugglers; and when one had good reasons there was no need of so many words. For morality, she maintains that she knows it all by heart, and that Lucas, her foster-father, is as wise as Socrates. There is nothing, therefore, but poetry that amuses her sometimes; and then she prefers fables to the more sublime poems, and tells you plainly that she had rather hear Fontaine's animals speak than the heroes of Virgil and Homer. In a word, she is at eighteen as much a child as at twelve; and in the midst of the most serious, the most interesting conversations, you would be surprised to see her amusing herself with a trifle, or growing dull the moment one would captivate her attention." Celicour, laughing within himself, took leave of M. de Fintac, who did him the favour to invite him to dine with him the next day.

The young man was so transported that he slept not that night. To dine with Agathe! it was the happiest day of his life. He arrives, and by his beauty, by his youth, by the air of serenity diffused over his countenance, one might have imagined they saw Apollo, if Fintac's Parnassus had been better composed; but as he wanted none but dependants and flatterers, he drew to his house only such persons as were fit to be so.

He introduced Celicour to them as a young poet of the greatest expectation, and made him take his place at table at his right hand. From that moment behold all the eyes of envy fixed upon him. Each of the guests thought he saw his own place usurped, and swore in the bottom of their souls to take revenge on him by decrying the first work he

should publish. In the meantime Celicour was generously received, caressed by all these gentlemen, and took them from that instant for the most honest people in the world. A new-comer excited emulation: wit hoisted all her sails: they judged the republic of letters; and as it is just to mingle commendation with criticism, they praised generously all the dead, and tore in pieces the living; the present company always excepted. All the new works which had succeeded without passing under the inspection of Fintac could but have their day, and that a short one; all those to which he had given the seal of his approbation were to attain to immortality, whatever the present age thought of them. They ran through all kinds of literature; and, in order to give more scope to erudition and criticism, they brought on the carpet this entirely new question, viz. "Which merited the preference, Corneille or Racine?" They said also on the subject the finest things in the world; when the little niece, who had not spoken a word, took it into her head to ask simply which of the two fruits, the orange or the peach, had the most exquisite taste, and merited the most commendation. Her uncle blushed at her simplicity, and the guests all looked down without deigning to reply to this idle foolery. "Niece," said Fintac, "at your age one should hear and hold one's tongue." Agathe, with an imperceptible half-smile, looked at Celicour, who had understood her perfectly well, and whose glance consoled her for the contempt of the company. I forgot to mention that he was placed opposite to her, and you may easily imagine that he listened very little to what was said around him. But the Connoisseur, who examined his countenance, perceived in it a very extraordinary fire. "See," said he to his geniuses, "see how talent pierces." "Yes," replied one of them, "we see it transpire like water through the pores of an eolipile." Fintac, taking Celicour by the hand, said to him, "There is a comparison now! Poetry and philosophy blended together! It is thus that

the talents border on each other, and that the Muses join hands. Confess," continued he, "that such dinners are not found in your country towns, where you see nothing; there are days when these gentlemen have even a hundred times more wit." "It would be hard not to have it," said one of them; "we are at the fountain head, *et purpureo bibimus ore nectar.*" "Ah! *purpureo!*" replied Fintac modestly, "you do me a great deal of honour." "Hark, young man, learn to quote." The young man was all the while very attentive to catch Agathe's looks, who on her side thought him very handsome.

On rising from table they went to walk in the garden, where the Connoisseur had taken care to get together rare plants from all quarters. He had, among other wonders, a parti-coloured cabbage, which drew the admiration of naturalists. Its folds, its festoon, the mixture of its colours, were the most astonishing things in the world. "Let them show," said Fintac, "a foreign plant which Nature has taken the trouble to form with more labour and delicacy. It is for the sake of avenging Europe on the prejudice of certain *virtuosi*, in favour of everything that comes from the Indies and the New World, that I have preserved this fine cabbage."

While they were admiring this prodigy, Agathe and Celicour had joined each other, as it were, without intending it, in a neighbouring walk. "Beautiful Agathe!" said the young man, showing her a rose, "would you let this flower die on the stalk?" "Where then would you have it die?" "Where I would die myself." Agathe blushed at this answer; and in that instant her uncle, with two wits, came and seated themselves in an adjacent arbour, from whence, without being perceived, he could overhear them. "If it is true," continued Celicour, "that souls pass from one body into another, I wish after my death to be such a rose as that. If any profane hand advances to gather me, I will conceal myself amid the prickles; but if some charming nymph deign to cast her eyes on me, I will lean towards her, expand

my bosom, exhale my perfumes, mingle them with her breath; and the desire of pleasing her shall animate my colours." "Very well; you will do so much that you will be plucked off your stalk, and the moment after you will be no more." "Ah, Madam! do you consider as nothing the happiness of being one moment——" His eyes finished saying what his mouth had begun. "And I," said Agathe, disguising her confusion, "if I had my choice, would wish to be changed into a dove, which is gentleness and innocence itself." "Add to these, tenderness and fidelity; yes, beautiful Agathe, the choice is worthy of you. The dove is the bird of Venus; Venus would distinguish you among your fellows; you would be the ornament of her car; Love would repose himself on your wings, or rather, he would cherish you in his bosom. It would be from his divine mouth that your bill would take ambrosia." Agathe, interrupted him, saying that he carried his fictions too far. "One word more," said Celicour: "a dove has a mate; if it depended on you to choose yours, what kind of a soul would you give him?" "That of a female friend," replied she. At these words Celicour looked on her with two eyes, in which were painted love, reproach, and grief.

"Very well!" said the uncle, getting up; "very well! there, now, is fine and good poetry for you. The image of this rose is of a freshness worthy Vanhuysum; that of the dove is a little picture of Boucher, the freshest, the most gallant in the world, *ut pictura poesis*. Courage, my lad, courage! the allegory is extremely well supported; we shall make something of you. Agathe, I have been pretty well pleased with your dialogue, and here is M. de Lexergue, who is as much surprised at it as I." "It is certain," said M. de Lexergue, "that there is in Miss's language something Anacreontic; it is the impression of her uncle's taste; he says nothing which is not stamped with the mark of sound antiquity." M. Lucide found in Celicour's fictions the *molle atque facetum*. "We must conclude this little scene," said

Fintac; "we must put it into verse; it will be one of the prettiest things we have ever seen." Celicour said, that, in order to complete it, he stood in need of Agathe's assistance; and, that the dialogue might have more ease and freedom in it, they thought it right to leave them alone. "To the dove, your mate, *the soul of a female friend!*" resumed Celicour. "Ah, beautiful Agathe! is your heart made only for friendship? Is it for that Love has delighted to assemble in you so many charms?" "There, now," said Agathe, smiling, "is the dialogue excellently renewed. I have but to take the reply; there is matter enough to carry us a great way." "If you please," said Celicour, "it is easy to abridge it." "Let us talk of something else," interrupted she. "Did the dinner amuse you?" "I heard there but one single word full of sense and refinement, which they had the folly to take for a simple question; all the rest escaped me. My soul was not at my ear." "It was very happy?" "Ah, very happy! for it was in my eyes." "If I pleased, I might pretend not to hear, or not to understand you; but I never put on disguise. I think it very natural, then, under favour of our wits, for you to take more pleasure in looking at me than in listening to them; and I confess to you, in my turn, that I am not sorry at having one to speak to me, though it were only by his eyes, in order to save me from the spleen that they give me. Now, then, we are come to a right understanding, and we shall amuse ourselves, for we have originals entertaining enough of their kind. For example, this M. Lucide thinks he always sees in things what nobody else has perceived in them. He seems as if Nature had told her secret in his ear; but everybody is not worthy to know what he thinks. He chooses in a circle a privileged confidant. This is commonly the most distinguished person; he leans mysteriously towards that person, and whispers his opinion. As for M. de Lexergue, he is a scholar of the first class; full of contempt for everything modern, he esteems things by the

number of ages. He would choose even that a young woman should have the air of antiquity, and he honours me with his attention because he thinks I have the profile of the Empress Poppæa. In the group which you see below there is an upright starch man, who makes pretty little nothings, but does not know what he means by them. He demands a day for reading; he names his auditory himself; he requires that the gate should be shut against every profane person; he arrives on his tiptoes, places himself before a table between two flambeaus; draws mysteriously out of his pocket a rose-coloured portfolio; throws around him a gracious look, which demands silence; announces a little romance of his own making which has had the good fortune to please some persons of consideration; reads it deliberately, in order to be the better tasted; and goes quite to the end without perceiving that everybody yawns at him. That little fidgeting man near him, so full of gesticulation, excites a pity in me which I am not able to express. Wit is to him like those sneezings which are going to come but which never do come. We see him dying with the desire of saying fine things; he has them at his tongue's end; but they seem to escape him the moment he is going to catch them. Ah, he is much to be pitied! That dry and tall man, who walks alone apart from them, is the most thoughtful and most empty person I know. Because he has a bob-wig and the vapours, he thinks himself an English philosopher; he grows heavy on the wing of a fly, and is so obscure in his ideas that one is sometimes tempted to think him profound."

While Agathe's wit was exercising itself on these characters, Celicour had his eyes fixed on hers. "Ah!" said he, "that your uncle, who knows so many things, should know so little of his niece's understanding! He represents you as a child!" "Oh, to be sure; and all these gentlemen consider me as such. Accordingly they put no restraint upon themselves, and the absurdity of wit is with me quite at its ease. Do not go and betray me now." "Never fear; but we must,

beautiful Agathe, cement our understanding by stricter ties than those of friendship." "You do injustice to friendship," replied Agathe; "there is something sweeter, perhaps; but there is nothing more solid."

At these words they came to interrupt them, and the Connoisseur, walking along with Celicour, asked him if the dialogue with his niece had been cleverly resumed. "It is not precisely what I wanted," said the young man; "but I will endeavour to supply it." "I am sorry," says Fintac, "that we interrupted you. Nothing is so difficult as to recover the natural thread when once we let it escape. This giddy girl has not caught your idea. She has sometimes lights; but all of a sudden they vanish. I hope at least that marriage will form her." "You think, then, of marrying her?" demanded Celicour, with a faltering voice. "Yes," replied Fintac, "and I depend upon you for the worthy celebration of that festival. You have seen M. de Lexergue; he is a man of great sense and profound erudition. It is to him that I give my niece." If Fintac had observed Celicour's countenance, he would have seen it grow pale at this news. "A man so serious, and so full of application, has need," continued he, "of something to dissipate him. He is rich; he has taken a liking to this girl, and in a week's time he is to marry her; but he exacts the greatest secrecy, and my niece herself knows nothing of it yet. As for you, it is highly necessary that you should be initiated into the mystery of a union which you are to celebrate. *O Hymen! O Hymenæ!* you understand me. It is an epithalamium that I ask of you; and here, now, is an opportunity to signalize yourself." "Ah, sir!——" "No modesty; it smothers all talents." "Excuse me." "You shall execute it; it is a piece in your own way, and which will do you a great deal of honour. My niece is young and handsome, and with an imagination and soul one is not exhausted on such a subject. With respect to the husband, I have already told you he is an extraordinary

man. Nobody so knowing in antiques. He has a cabinet of medals which he values at forty thousand crowns. He was even going to see the ruins of Herculaneum, and was very near making a voyage to Palmyra. You see how many images all this presents to poetry. But you are ruminating upon it already; yes, I see on your countenance that profound meditation which hatches the buds of genius, and disposes them to fruitfulness. Go, then; go, and profit of such precious moments. I am going also to bury myself in study."

Seized with consternation at what he had just heard, Celicour burned with impatience to see Agathe again. The next day he made a pretence to go and consult the Connoisseur; and before he went into his study, he asked if she was to be seen. "Ah, Mademoiselle!" said he to her, "you see a man driven to despair." "What ails you?" "I am undone; you are to marry M. de Lexergue." "Who has told you that story?" "Who! M. de Fintac himself." "Seriously?" "He has charged me to write your epithalamium." "Very well, will it be a pretty one?" "You laugh! you think it charming to have M. de Lexergue for a husband!" "Oh, very charming!" "Ah! at least, cruel maid, in pity to me who adore you, and who am to lose you!" Agathe interrupted him as he fell on his knees. "Confess," said she to him, "that these moments of distraction are convenient for a declaration. As the person that makes it is not himself, so she who hears him dares not complain; and, by favour of this disorder, love thinks it may risk everything. But softly, moderate yourself, and let us see what distracts you." "Your tranquillity, cruel as you are." "You would have me afflict myself, then, at a misfortune which I am not afraid of?" "I tell you that it is determined that you shall marry M. de Lexergue." "How! would you have them determine, without me, on that which, without me, cannot be put into execution?" "But if your uncle has given his word?" "If he has given

it, he shall retract it." "How, would you have the courage?" "The courage of not saying *Yes*—a fine effort of resolution!" "Ah, I am at the summit of joy!" "And your joy is a folly as well as your grief." "You will not be M. de Lexergue's!" "Very well; what then?" "You will be mine." "Oh, to be sure! there is no medium; and every woman who will not be his wife will be yours, that is clear! Indeed, you argue like a country poet. Go, go see my uncle; and take care that he has no suspicion of the information that you have given me."

"Well, is the epithalamium in forwardness?" said the Connoisseur to him, as soon as he came into his presence. "I have the plan in my head." "Let us see!" "I have taken the allegory of Time espousing Truth." "The thought is beautiful; but it is gloomy, and, besides, Time is very old." "M. de Lexergue is an antiquary." "True; but we do not love to be told that we are as old as Time." "Would you like the nuptials of Venus and Vulcan?" "Vulcan! on account of bronzes and medals. No; the adventure of Mars is too disagreeable. You will find out, on consideration, some thought still more happy. But *apropos* of Vulcan, will you come this evening with us to see the essay of an artificer whom I protect? It is some Chinese rockets, of which I have given him the composition. I have even added something to it; for I must always put in something of my own." Celicour doubted not but Agathe would be of the party, and repaired thither with eagerness.

The spectators were seated. Fintac and his niece took up one window, and there remained on Agathe's side a small space, which she had contrived to leave vacant. Celicour stole timorously into it, and leaped with joy on seeing himself so near Agathe. The uncle's eyes were attentive to follow the flight of the rockets; Celicour's were fixed upon the niece. The stars might have fallen from the heavens and not have disturbed him. His hand met on the side of the

window a hand softer than the down of flowers; a trembling seized him, which Agathe must have perceived. The hand he touched scarce made a motion to withdraw itself; his made one to retain it. Agathe's eyes turned upon him, and met his, which asked for pardon. She perceived that she should afflict him by withdrawing that dear hand, and, whether through weakness or pity, she thought proper to leave it immovable. This was a great deal, but not quite enough. Agathe's hand was shut, and Celicour's could not clasp it. Love inspired him with the courage to open it. Gods! what was his surprise and joy when he found her yield insensibly to this soft violence! He holds Agathe's hand open in his, he presses it lovingly—conceive his felicity! It is not yet perfect! the hand he presses replies not to his; he draws it towards him, inclines towards her, and dares to rest it on his heart, which advances to meet it. It wants to get from him, he stops it, he holds it captive; and love knows with what rapidity his heart beats under this timid hand. This was a loadstone to her. O triumph! O rapture! It is no longer Celicour that presses it; it is the hand itself that answers the beatings of Celicour's heart. Those who have never loved have never known this emotion; and even those who have loved have never tasted it but once. Their looks were mingled with that touching languor which is the sweetest of all declarations, when the branch of the fireworks displayed itself in the air. Then Agathe's hand made a new effort to impress itself on the heart of Celicour; and while around them they applauded the glittering beauty of the rockets, our lovers, taken up with themselves, expressed by burning sighs the regret of separation. Such was this dumb scene, worthy to be cited among the examples of eloquent silence.

From this moment, their hearts understanding each other, there was no longer any secret between them; both tasted, for the first time, the pleasure of loving; and this blossom of sensibility is the purest essence of the soul. But love,

which takes the complexion of characters, was timid and serious in Celicour; lively, joyous, and waggish in Agathe.

However, the day appointed for informing her of her marriage with M. de Lexergue arrives. The antiquary comes to see her, finds her alone, and makes her a declaration of his love, founded on the consent of her uncle. "I know," said she, rallying, "that you love me in profile; but for me, I should like a husband that I could love in front; and to speak frankly, you are not the thing for me. You have, you say, my uncle's consent, but you shall not marry me without my own; and I believe I may assure you that you will not have it as long as I live." In vain did Lexergue protest to her that she united in her eyes more charms than the Venus de Medici. Agathe wished him antique Venuses, and assured him that she was not one. "You have your choice," said she to him, "to expose me to displease my uncle, or to spare me that chagrin. You will afflict me in charging me with the rupture, you will oblige me by taking it upon yourself; and the best thing we can do when we are not loved is to endeavour not to be hated. And so your very humble servant."

The antiquary was mortally offended at Agathe's refusal; but out of pride he would have concealed it if the reproach cast upon him of failing in his word had not extorted the confession from him. Fintac, whose authority and consideration were now brought into question, was enraged at the opposition of his niece, and did all that was possible to conquer it; but he never could draw from her any other answer but that she was no medal, and he concluded by telling her in a passion that she should never have any other husband. This was not the only obstacle to the happiness of our lovers. Celicour could hope for only part of a small inheritance; and Agathe was entirely dependent on her uncle, who was now less than ever disposed to strip himself of his wealth for her. In happier times he might have taken upon him their little family affairs; but after this refusal

of Agathe's, it required a little miracle to engage him to it; and it was love himself that wrought it.

"Flatter my uncle," said Agathe to Celicour; "intoxicate him with encomiums, but carefully conceal from him our love. For that purpose let us diligently avoid being found together, and content yourself with informing me of your conduct *en passant*. Fintac dissembled not to Celicour his resentment against his niece. "Can she have," said he, "any secret inclination? If I knew it—but, no! she is a little fool, who loves nothing, and feels nothing. Ah! if she reckons upon my inheritance, she is mistaken; I know better how to dispose of my favours." The young man, terrified at the menaces of the uncle, took the first opportunity to inform the niece of it. She only rallied upon the occasion. "He is raving mad against you, my dear Agathe." "That is quite indifferent to me." "He says he will disinherit you." "Say as he says, gain his confidence, and leave the rest to love and time." Celicour followed Agathe's advice, and at every commendation that he bestowed on Fintac, Fintac thought he discovered in him a new degree of merit. "The justness of understanding, the penetration of this young man is without example at his age," said he to his friends. At last the confidence he placed in him was such that he thought he could trust to him what he called the secret of his life; this was a dramatic piece which he had composed, and which he had not had the resolution to read to anyone, for fear of risking his reputation. After demanding an inviolable secrecy, he appointed the time for reading it. At this news Agathe was transported with joy. "That is well," said she. "Courage! redouble the dose of incense; good or bad, in your eyes this piece has no equal."

Fintac, *tête-à-tête* with the young man, after double locking his study door, drew out of a casket this precious manuscript, and read with enthusiasm the coldest, the most insipid comedy that ever was written. It cost the young man a

deal of mortification to applaud such flat stuff; but Agathe had recommended it to him. He applauded it, therefore, and the Connoisseur was transported. "Confess," said he to him, after reading it, "confess that this is fine." "Oh, very fine!" "Very well, it is time to tell you, then, why I have chosen you for my only confidant. I have burned with desire this great while to see this piece on the stage, but I would not have it go under my name." Celicour trembled at these words. "I was unwilling to trust anybody; but, in short, I think you worthy of this mark of my friendship: you shall present my work as your own; I will have nothing but the pleasure of success, and I leave the glory of it to you." The thought of imposing upon the public would alone have terrified the young man, but that of seeing appear and being damned under his name so contemptible a work shocked him still more. Confounded at the proposal he withstood it a long time, but his opposition was to no purpose. "My secret being confided," said Fintac, "engages you in honour to grant me what I ask. It is indifferent to the public whether the piece be yours or mine, and this friendly imposition can hurt nobody. My piece is my treasure; I make you a present of it; the very remotest posterity will know nothing of it. Here, then, your delicacy is spared every way; if, after this, you refuse to present this work as your own, I shall think that you do not like it, that you only deceive me in praising it, and that you are equally unworthy of my friendship and esteem." What would not Agathe's lover resolve upon rather than incur the hatred of her uncle? He assured him that he was only restrained by laudable motives, and asked twenty-four hours to determine. "He has read it to me," said he to Agathe. "Well?" "Well, it is execrable." "I thought so." "He wants me to bring it on the stage in my name." "What?" "To have it pass for mine." "Ah, Celicour, Heaven be praised! have you accepted it?" "Not yet, but I shall be forced to it." "So much the better." "I tell you it is detestable."

"So much the better." "It will be damned." "So much the better, I tell you; we must submit to everything." Celicour did not sleep that night for vexation, and the next day went to the uncle and told him that there was nothing which he would not sooner resolve upon than to displease him. "I would not expose you rashly," said the Connoisseur; "copy out the piece with your own hand; you shall read it to our friends, who are excellent judges, and if they do not think the success infallible, you shall not be bound to anything. I require only one thing of you; and that is to study it in order to read it well." This precaution gave the young man some hope. "I am," said he to Agathe, "to read the piece to his friends; if they think it bad, he excuses me from bringing it out." "They will think it good, and so much the better; we should be undone if they were to dislike it." "Explain yourself." "Get thee gone! they must not see us together." What she had foreseen came to pass. The judges being assembled, the Connoisseur announced this piece as a prodigy, and especially in a young poet. The young poet read his best, and, after Fintac's example, they were in ecstasies at every line, and applauded every scene. At the conclusion they clapped and huzzaed; they discovered in it the delicacy of Aristophanes, the elegance of Plautus, the comic force of Terence, and they knew no piece of Molière fit to be set in competition with this. After this trial there was no room to hesitate. The players were not of the same opinion with the wits; for they knew beforehand that these good people had no taste, but there was an order to perform the piece. Agathe, who had assisted at the reading, had applauded with all her might; there were even pathetic passages at which she appeared to be moved, and her enthusiasm for the work had a little reconciled her with the author. "Could it be possible," said Celicour to her, "that you should have thought that good!" "Excellent!" said she, "excellent for us!" and at these words she left him. While the piece

was in rehearsal Fintac ran from house to house to dispose the wits in favour of a young poet of such great expectation. At last the great day arrives, and the Connoisseur assembles his friends to dinner. "Let us go, gentlemen," said he, "to support your own performance. You have judged the piece admirable, you have warranted the success, and your honour is concerned. As to me, you know how great my weakness is. I have the bowels of a father for all rising geniuses, and I feel in as lively a manner as themselves the uneasiness they suffer in those terrible moments."

After dinner, the good friends of the Connoisseur tenderly embraced Celicour, and told him that they were going into the pit to be the witnesses rather than the instruments of his triumph. They repaired thither; the piece was played; it did not go through, and the first mark of impatience was given by these good friends.

Fintac was in the house, trembling and pale as death; but all the time that the play lasted this unhappy and tender father made incredible efforts to encourage the spectators to succour his child. In short, he saw it expire, and then sinking beneath his grief, dragged himself to his coach, confounded, dejected, and murmuring against Heaven for having been born in so barbarous an age. And where was poor Celicour? Alas! they had granted him the honours of a latticed box, where, sitting on thorns, he had seen what they called his piece, tottering in the first act, stumbling in the second, and tumbling in the third. Fintac had promised to go and take him up, but had forgot it. What was now to become of him? How escape through that multitude, who would not fail to know him again, and to point him out with the finger? At last, seeing the front of the house empty, he took courage and descended; but the stove-rooms, the galleries, the stairs were yet full; his consternation made him be taken notice of, and he heard on all sides —"It is he without doubt—yes, there he is; that is he! Poor wretch!—it is a pity!—he will do better another time."

He perceived in a corner a group of authors, cracking jests on their companions. He saw also the good friends of Fintac, who triumphed in his fall, and, on seeing him, turned their backs upon him. Overwhelmed with confusion and grief, he repaired to the true author's, and his first care was to ask for Agathe; he had entire liberty of seeing her, for her uncle had shut himself up in his closet. "I forewarned you of it; it is fallen, and fallen shamefully," said Celicour, throwing himself into a chair. "So much the better," said Agathe. "What! so much the better, when your lover is covered with shame, and makes himself, in order to please you, the talk and ridicule of all Paris? Ah! it is too much. No, Mademoiselle, it is no longer time to jest. I love you more than my life; but in the state of humiliation in which you now see me I am capable of renouncing both life and yourself. I do not know how it has happened that the secret has not escaped me. It is but little to expose myself to the contempt of the public. Your cruel uncle will abandon me. I know him, he will be the first to blush at seeing me again; and what I have done to obtain you, perhaps, cuts off my hope for ever. Let him prepare, however, to resume his piece, or to give me your hand. There is but one way to console me, and to oblige me to silence. Heaven is my witness that if, through an impossibility, his work had succeeded, I should have given to him the honour of it. It is fallen, and I bear the shame; but it is an effort of love, for which you alone can be the recompense." "It must be confessed," said the wicked Agathe, in order to irritate him still more, "that it is a cruel thing to see one's self hissed for another." "Cruel to such a degree that I would not play such a part for my own father." "With what an air of contempt they see a wretch pass along whose play is damned." "The contempt is unjust, that is one comfort; but insolent pity, there is the mortification!" "I suppose you were greatly confused in coming downstairs! Did you salute the ladies?" "I

could have wished to annihilate myself." "Poor boy! and how will you dare to appear in the world again?" "I will never appear again, I swear to you, but with the name of your husband, or till after I have retorted on M. de Fintac the humiliation of this failure." "You are resolved, then, to drive him to the wall?" "Fully resolved, do not doubt it. Let him determine this very evening. If he refuses me your hand, all the newspapers shall publish that he is the author of the damned piece." "And that is what I wanted," said Agathe with triumph; "there is the object of all those *so much the betters* which put you so much out of patience. Go to my uncle; hold firm, and be assured that we shall be happy."

"Well, sir, and what say you to it?" demanded Celicour of the Connoisseur. "I say, my friend, that the public is a stupid animal, and that we must renounce all labour for it. But console yourself; your work does you honour in the opinion of men of taste." "My work! it is all yours." "Talk lower, I beseech you, my dear lad; talk lower!" "It is very easy for you to moderate yourself, sir—you, who have prudently saved yourself from the fall of your piece; but I, whom it crushes——" "Ah! do not think that such a fall does you any injury. The more enlightened persons have discerned in this work strokes that proclaim genius." "No, sir, I do not flatter myself; the piece is bad; I have purchased the right of speaking of it with freedom, and all the world are of the same opinion. If it had succeeded I should have declared that it was yours, if it had been but partly condemned I should have taken it upon myself; but so thorough a condemnation is above my strength, and I beg of you to take the burden upon yourself." "I, child! I, on my decline, incur this ridicule! To lose in one day a respect which is the work of forty years, and which forms the hope of my old age, would you have the cruelty to require it?" "Have not you the cruelty to render me the victim of my complaisance? You know how much it has cost me."

"I know all that I owe to you; but, my dear Celicour, you are young, you have time enough to take your revenge, and there needs but one instance of success to make you forget this misfortune. In the name of friendship support it with constancy, I conjure you, with tears in my eyes." "I consent, sir; but I perceive too well the consequences of this first essay to expose myself to the prejudice which it leaves behind it. I renounce the theatre, poetry, the belles lettres——" "Well, you are in the right; for a young man of your age there are many other objects of ambition." "There is but one for me, sir, and that depends on you." "Speak, there is no service which I would not do you; what do you require?" "Your niece's hand." "Agathe's hand!" "Yes, I adore her; and it was she, who to please you, made me consent to everything that you desired." "My niece in the secret?" "Yes, sir." "Ah! her giddiness will, perhaps—— Holloa! somebody, run to my niece, and bid her come here." "Compose yourself; Agathe is less a child, less giddy than she appears." "Ah! you make me tremble.—My dear Agathe, you know what has passed, and the misfortune which has just happened." "Yes, uncle." "Have you revealed this fatal secret to anyone?" "To nobody in the world." "Can I thoroughly depend upon it?" "Yes, I swear to you." "Well then, my children, let it die with us three. I ask it of you as I would ask my life. Agathe, Celicour loves you; he renounces, out of friendship to me, the theatre, poetry, letters; and I owe him your hand as the price of so great a sacrifice." "He is too well paid," cried Celicour, seizing Agathe's hand. "I marry an unsuccessful author," said she, smiling, "but I engage to console him for his misfortune. The worst of the matter is that they deny him wit, and so many honest people are content without it. And now, my dear uncle, while Celicour renounces the glory of being a poet, had you not as well renounce that of being a Connoisseur? You will be a great deal the easier."

Agathe was interrupted by the arrival of Clement, the faithful valet of her uncle. "Ah, sir!" said he, quite out of breath, "your friends, your good friends!" "Well, Clement?" "I was in the pit; they were all there." "I know it. Did they applaud?" "Applaud, the traitors! If you had seen with what fury they mangled this unfortunate young man. I beg, sir, you will discharge me if such people are ever to enter your house again." "Ah! the rascals, scoundrels!" said Fintac. "Yes, it is done; I will burn my books, and break off all connection with these men of letters." "Keep your books for your amusement," said Agathe, embracing her uncle; "and with respect to men of letters, wish to have none but your friends, and you will find some worthy of esteem."

MADAME DE STAËL

(1766–1817)

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MIRZA, OR, LETTER OF A TRAVELLER

(Translated by Henry Roche)

Permit me, Madam, to relate to you an adventure which I met with in my travels, which may perhaps prove interesting to you. About a month ago I was informed at Goree that the Governor had determined to settle a negro family at the distance of some leagues from that place, in order to establish a plantation similar to those in St. Domingo, doubtless flattering himself that such an example would excite the Africans to the cultivation of sugar, and that drawing amongst themselves the free trade of this commodity, the Europeans would not tear them from their country to expose them to the dreadful yoke of slavery. Vainly the most eloquent writers had endeavoured to obtain this revolution from the virtue of mankind. The enlightened statesman, despairing of conquering selfish interest, would leave the question to humanity, or would withdraw the advantages for which it is maintained; but the negroes, thoughtless of the future even on their own account, are still more incapable of looking ahead for future generations, and reject present evil without comparing it with the lot which they might avoid. One African, delivered from slavery by the generosity of the Governor, alone agreed to his project. A prince in his own country, some negroes of inferior rank had followed him, and cultivated his land under his direction. I desired to be conducted to him. I walked one part of a day, and the following evening arrived near a house, which the French,

they told me, had assisted to build, but which had still a primitive appearance. When I approached, the negroes were enjoying their season of recreation: they amused themselves with drawing the bow, perhaps regretting the time when this pleasure was their sole occupation. Ourika, the wife of Ximeo, the negro chief, was seated at some distance from the games, looking anxiously at her daughter, two years old, who was playing at her feet. My guide, advancing towards her, asked shelter for me in the name of the Governor. "Is it the Governor who has sent him?" cried she: "let him come in, he is welcome; all we have comes from him." She approached me with eagerness: her beauty enchanted me: she possessed the true charm of her sex, whatever can be imagined of softness and grace. "Where is Ximeo?" demanded my guide. "He has not returned," she replied: "he takes his evening walk when the sun is not above the horizon; when the twilight ceases to shine he will return, and it will be no longer night for me." In finishing these words she sighed and departed, and when she again approached I perceived some traces of tears upon her face. We entered the hut, where we were served with a repast composed of every fruit of the country: I tasted them with pleasure, pleased with new sensations. On a knock at the gate, Ourika started, rose with precipitation, opened the door of the hut, and threw herself into the arms of Ximeo, who embraced her without appearing to know what he did or what he saw. I went up to him. You cannot imagine a more delightful figure: his features had none of the defects usual in men of his colour: his look produced an effect which I have never since felt; it pierced the soul: the melancholy it expressed penetrated the hearts of those on whom it fell. The form of the Apollo Belvedere is not more perfect: it may, perhaps, be rather too small for a man, but the depression of sorrow which was announced by all his motions, and painted in his looks, accorded more with delicacy than strength. He

expressed no surprise at seeing us, and appeared inaccessible to every feeling which was foreign to his predominant idea. We told him we were come from the Governor, and the intention of our journey. "The Governor," said he, "has a right to my gratitude: in the estate in which I am, would you believe it, I have still a benefactor?" He sometimes spoke to us of the motives which had determined him to cultivate these lands, and I was astonished at his understanding and his facility of expression. He perceived it and said: "You are surprised when we are not a horde of brutes, whose destiny you may determine." "No," I replied, "but a Frenchman would not speak his own language better than you." "Ah, you are right," said he, "we long preserve some rays of light when we have lived near an angel; and her beautiful eyes were cast down to see nothing but me." Ourika burst into tears, which Ximeo at length perceived. "Pardon me," cried he, taking her by the hand, "the present belongs to thee; suffer remembrances. To-morrow," said he, turning to me, "we will go together over our plantation; you will see whether I may flatter myself with its answering the wishes of the Governor. The best bed is prepared for you; sleep in peace; I wish you comfort here. The wounded heart," said he in a low voice, "fears nothing for itself, but wishes to see the happiness of others."

I went to bed, but could not sleep. I was penetrated with the sadness of which everything I saw bore the impression, though I was ignorant of the cause; but I felt an emotion similar to what we feel on beholding a picture which represents melancholy. I rose at break of day, and finding Ximeo still more depressed than on the preceding evening, I inquired the reason. "My grief," replied he, "is fixed in my heart, and can neither increase nor diminish, but uniformity of life makes more imperceptibly, and new events, whatever they may be, produce new reflections, which are always fresh sources of tears." With extreme care he

showed me the whole of his plantation, and I was surprised at the order I everywhere observed. The land produced quite as much as a similar space cultivated at St. Domingo by the same number of men, and the happy negroes were not overwhelmed by labour. I saw with pleasure that cruelty was absent. I asked Ximeo who had instructed him in the culture of land, and upon the proper division of the day for labour. "I have had," said he, "little instruction, but reason can accomplish what reason discovers to be necessary: since we are forbidden to die, we must consecrate our lives to others. What could I do for myself? I had a horror of slavery: I could not have conceived the barbarous designs of men of your colour: I sometimes thought their Deity was the enemy of ours, and had commanded them to make us suffer; but when I learned that one of our own productions, neglected by us, alone occasioned the cruel sufferings of the Africans, I accepted the offer which was made me of giving them an example of cultivation. May a free commerce be established between the two parts of the world! May my unhappy countrymen renounce a savage life, devote themselves to labour, to satisfy your greedy desires, and contribute to save some from their unfortunate destiny! May those who are flattered with the hope of avoiding such a lot be occupied by an equal zeal to serve others."

Whilst he thus addressed me we approached a gate which led to a spacious wood, with which one side of the estate was bounded. I believed that Ximeo was about to open it, but he turned aside to avoid it. "Why," said I, "do you not show——" "Stop," cried he, "you have a look of feeling; can you bear the long recital of misfortune? It is two years since I have really spoken—what I say is not speaking. You see I have need to pour out my heart, but you ought not to be flattered by the confidence, yet I am encouraged by your kindness, and expect your pity." "Fear nothing," cried I, "you shall not be deceived."

"I was born," said Ximeo, "in the Kingdom of Cayor: my father was of royal extraction, and the chief of some tribes, which were confided to him by the sovereign. I was early exercised in the art of defending my country, and from my infancy the bow and the javelin were familiar to me. From that time I was destined to be the husband of Ourika, the daughter of my father's sister: I loved her as soon as I was capable of love; and this feeling was first developed in me for her and by her. We were frequently at war with the Jaloffes, our neighbours; and as we mutually continued that atrocious custom of selling our prisoners of war to the Europeans, a profound hatred, which even peace could not suspend, did not permit any communication between us. One day, in hunting over our mountains, I was insensibly drawn to a greater distance than I intended: I heard a female voice remarkable for its sweetness: I listened to the song, but heard not the words usually sung by young women; the love of liberty, the dread of slavery, were the subject of those sublime hymns which arrested my admiration. I approached; a young female arose: struck with the contrast between her age and the subject of her meditations, I sought to find something supernatural in her features which might announce that inspiration, which is supplied by the continued reflections of advanced age. She was not beautiful, but her noble and regular form, her enchanting eyes, her animated countenance, left love nothing more to desire in her appearance. She came up to me, and spoke long before I could reply. At last I described my astonishment, which increased when I learnt that she had composed the words I had heard. 'Cease your surprise,' said she: 'a Frenchman established in Senegal, discontented with his lot, and miserable in his own country, retired amongst us: this old man has deigned to take care of my youth, and has given me what is most desirable amongst the Europeans, the knowledge which they abuse, and the philosophy whose lessons they so little follow. I have learnt the French

language: I have read some of their books, and I amuse myself with thinking alone upon these mountains.' Every word she uttered redoubled my interest and curiosity: it was no longer a woman, it was a Grace I seemed to hear; and those men who amongst us consecrate themselves to the worship of the gods never had appeared to me animated by such noble enthusiasm. On quitting her I obtained permission to see her again : everywhere I was followed by her remembrance; but I carried away more of admiration than of love, and for a long time, confiding in this distinction, I saw Mirza, which was the name of the young woman, without conceiving I should offend Ourika. At last, I one day inquired if she had ever loved. I trembled on putting this question, but her easy wit and open character made all her replies easy. 'No,' said she, 'I have been loved sometimes: perhaps I have been desirous of being sensible of that passion. I wish to know this sentiment which is diffused through life, and creates from itself alone the fate of every instant of time; but I believe I have reflected too much to prove this illusion. I feel all the emotions of my own heart, and I see those of others. I have not to this time either deceived myself or been deceived.' This last word afflicted me. 'Mirza,' said I, 'how I pity you! the pleasures of thought are not the whole of occupation; those of the heart can alone suffice to fill all the faculties of the soul.' She instructed me in the meantime with a patience that nothing could weary, and I was not long in learning all that she knew herself. When I interrupted her with encomiums she ceased to listen; when I paused she continued; but I saw by her conversation, though I had praised her, it was of me alone she thought. At last, intoxicated with her grace, her understanding, and her looks, I felt that I loved her, and I dared to declare it. What expressions did I not employ to make her conceive the idea of that elevation I had found in her mind! I was ready to expire at her feet with passion and with fear. 'Mirza,' repeated I, 'place me above the

world by telling me you love me; open to me the view of heaven, that I may mount it with you.' On hearing this she was moved, and tears filled those beautiful eyes, where I had only seen the expression of genius. 'Ximeo,' said she, 'to-morrow I will answer thee; expect not from me the arts of thy countrywomen; to-morrow thou shalt read my heart—reflect upon thy own.' In saying this she quitted me long before sunset, the usual signal for her retreat, and I sought not to detain her. The ascendancy of her character made me submissive to her will. Since I had known Mirza I saw less of Ourika. I deceived her; I pretended journeys; I retarded the time for our union; I dismissed the future from my mind instead of concentrating upon its demands.

"At last arrived the morrow, which seemed to have been separated by ages from the preceding evening. Mirza advanced first to me. She had passed the morning in tears. 'Ximeo,' said she, in a firm but gentle voice, 'art thou sure that thou lovest me? Is it certain that in these extended regions no object has fixed thy heart?' Protestations were my reply. 'Well, I will believe thee. Nature, which surrounds us, is the only witness of thy promises. I know nothing certain of thee but what I have learned from thy own mouth. My loneliness, my solitude form the whole of my security. What distrust, what obstacle have I opposed to thy will? Thou wilt not deceive my esteem for Ximeo; thou wilt not injure me for loving thee. I have distanced myself from my family, my friends, my country, to depend alone upon thee. I ought in thy sight to be as sacred as decrepitude, childhood and misery. No, I can see nothing: no——' I interrupted her. I knelt at her feet. I believed myself true. The force of the present made me forget the past and the future. O God! what passionate expressions did she find! How happy was she in loving. Ah! during two months thus passed, whatever there is of love and happiness was collected in her heart. I rejoiced; but

insensibly I became calm. Strange caprice of human nature! I was so struck with the pleasure she had in seeing me that I soon began to visit her rather for her sake than my own. I was so secure of a reception that I no longer trembled before her. Mirza did not perceive this. She spoke, she replied, she wept, she consoled herself; and her ardent mind acted upon itself. Ashamed of her error, and more ashamed of myself, I was obliged to leave her. War was declared in another extremity of the Kingdom of Cayor, and I resolved to go, but it was necessary to announce this to Mirza. At that moment I felt how dear she was to me. Her confiding and gentle security took from me the power of announcing my project. She seemed so wholly to live in my presence that my language froze when I wished to speak of my departure. I resolved to write : this art, which she had taught me, was to be used for her misery. Twenty times I quitted her, but as often returned. The unfortunate being gladly mistook my pity for love. At last I departed, and wrote to her that my duty obliged us to separate, but that I should return to her feet more tender than before. What a reply did she send! Ah! language of love, what are thy charms when embellished with thought! What was her despair at my absence, her desire for my return! I shuddered at the remembrance of her excessive love; for my father never would have acknowledged as a daughter a wife taken from the country of the Jaloffes.

" All these obstacles appeared when I withdrew the veil that had hid me from myself. I again saw Ourika. Her beauty, her tears, the strength of a first attachment, the entreaties of all my family, what shall I say?—whatever appears insurmountable when the heart is enervated—all conspired to render me unfaithful; and my union with Ourika was ratified in the presence of the gods. The time fixed for my return to Mirza in the meantime approached. I wished to see her: I hoped to lessen the blow I was to

inflict; and I believed this possible. When we no longer love, we no longer divine its effects; even memory refuses to aid us. What were my sensations in traversing those scenes, the witnesses of my protestations and happiness! Nothing was changed but my heart; yet I scarcely knew them again. No sooner was I beheld by Mirza, than I believe she experienced in one moment more of happiness than is generally spread over the whole of life. How can I describe to you by what dreadful gradations I led the unfortunate Mirza to the knowledge of my heart? My lips trembled when they pronounced the word friendship. 'Friendship!' cried she, 'thy friendship! Barbarian, ought such a sentiment to be offered to my mind? Give me death, that now is all thou canst do for me.' Her excessive grief seemed nearly to produce this effect. She fell at my feet without motion. Monster that I was, it was then that I should have deceived her, but it was then I was true. 'Leave me, unfeeling man,' said she; 'the old man who watched over my infancy, and who was a father to me, may yet live some time; I must exist for him. I am indeed dead already,' added she, placing her hand upon her heart, 'but my cares are necessary to him—leave me.' 'I cannot,' cried I, 'I cannot support thy hatred.' 'My hatred?' replied she; 'fear it not, Ximeo; there are hearts which alone know love, and in which every other passion acts only against themselves. Farewell, Ximeo, another is about to possess thee.' 'No, never, never,' said I. 'I believe thee no longer now,' replied she; 'yesterday thy words might have made me doubt whether the sun shone. Ximeo, press me to thy heart; call me thy beloved mistress; recall thy former accents which I yet hear, not, as before, to enjoy them, but as a remembrance. But that is impossible. Farewell, I shall again find them when I am alone; my heart will hear them always; they are the cause of that death which I bear and retain in my heart. Ximeo, farewell!'

"The affecting sound of this last word, the effort she made to depart, are all present to my mind, her image is before my eyes. God! render this illusion still more strong, that I may still see her one moment, or rather feel what I then lost. I remained a long time motionless in the place she had quitted, distracted, agitated like the wretch who has committed some monstrous crime. Night surprised me before I thought of returning home. Remorse, remembrance, the feeling of Mirza's misery were attached to my soul. Her shade appeared before me as if the termination of her happiness had been that of her life.

"War was declared against the Jaloffes, and I was called to fight against the countrymen of Mirza. I wished to acquire glory in her eyes, to justify her choice, and still to merit the happiness I had renounced. I had little fear of death, and had made so bad a use of life that I risked it perhaps with a secret pleasure. I was dangerously wounded, but learned, on my recovery, that a female daily placed herself before the threshold of my door motionless, but starting at the least noise; and that, when I was one day worse, she fainted; that on her recovery she exclaimed, 'Let him not know the state in which you have seen me; to him I am even less than a stranger; my concern would irritate him.' At last one day, a day how memorable! still faint and weak, my family with Ourika came to visit me. I was calm when I dismissed the remembrance of her whom I had caused to despair; at least I believed I was. I thought I had been conducted by fate. I had indeed acted as one thus governed; and I so much feared the time of repentance that I employed every effort to keep my thoughts fixed upon the past. The Jaloffes, our enemies, broke suddenly into the town we inhabited. We were without defence, and sustained a long attack; but at last they succeeded, and made many prisoners, amongst whom was myself. What were my feelings when I beheld myself loaded with fetters! The cruel Hottentots only destine the vanquished to death;

but we, more infamously barbarous, serve our common enemies and justify their crimes by becoming their accomplices. A detachment from the Jaloffes made us march all the night. When day appeared we found ourselves upon the banks of the Senegal, where barks were already prepared. I saw white men, and was convinced of my lot. Our conductors soon began to make vile conditions for their infamous exchange. The Europeans examined with curiosity our strength and our age to found upon them the hope of our being longer able to support the evils to which we were destined. I had already taken my determination. I hoped that in passing to this fatal bark my chains would be loosened, and leave me the power of plunging into the river, and that in defiance of the ready assistance of my avaricious possessions the weight of my irons would carry me to the bottom. With my eyes fixed upon the ground and my thoughts attached to the terrible hope which I had embraced, I seemed to be separated from surrounding objects. Suddenly a voice, which happiness and grief had made familiar to me, made my heart bound, and tore me from motionless meditation. I looked, and beheld Mirza, not as a mortal, but beautiful as an angel; for her mind was painted upon her countenance. I heard her demand from the Europeans to be heard. Her voice trembled, but it was neither with fear nor tenderness. 'Europeans,' said she, 'to cultivate your lands you condemn us to slavery; your interest renders our misfortunes necessary to you; you resemble only the God of evil; and to make us suffer is the only object of that misery to which you destine us. Behold this young man; weakened by his wounds, he can neither support the length of the voyage nor the labours you demand. You see my strength and youth. My sex has not enervated my courage. Take me as a slave instead of Ximeo. I will live, since this is the price at which you grant him liberty. I will no longer regard slavery as degrading. I will respect the power of my masters; over me shall they

retain it; and by their benefits it shall be consecrated. Ximeo ought to cherish life; Ximeo is beloved. I belong to no one upon earth. I can withdraw from it without leaving a void in any heart which will feel that I exist no more. I go to finish my days; a new happiness makes me survive my heart. Ah! allow yourselves to be moved; and when your pity does not oppose your interest, resist not its voice.'

"On finishing these words, the noble Mirza, whom the fear of death would never have induced to fall at the feet of kings, humbly bent her knee, but preserved in this attitude all her dignity; and admiration and shame were the lot of those she implored. For one moment she might think I accepted her generosity; for I had lost the power of speech, and was tormented with my inability to regain it. The ferocious Europeans cried with one voice, 'We accept the change; she is young, she is beautiful, she is courageous; we will take the negress and leave her friend.' They approached Mirza. 'Barbarians!' cried I, 'take me! respect her age, her weakness. Jaloffes! will you consent that a female of your country shall be a slave instead of your most cruel enemy?' 'Stop!' said Mirza, 'cease to be generous. It is alone for thyself that thou dost this act of virtue. Had my happiness been dear to thee I should not have been abandoned. I loved thee more when I knew thee insensible. Leave me the right of complaint, since thou canst not withdraw my misery. Tear not from me the only good that remains—the delicious thought of belonging to thee by the service I have done thee. I have followed thy destiny. I shall die if my life is no longer useful to thee. Thou hast only this means of saving my life. Darest thou persist in thy refusal?' I have since recalled all her words. At the time I believed I should hear them no more. I shuddered at the design of Mirza. I trembled lest these vile Europeans should not accede. I dared not to declare that nothing should separate me from her. These greedy merchants

would have dragged away both of us. Their hearts, incapable of feeling, perhaps already conceived this would ensue; already even they promised themselves in future to choose as captives those who from love or duty would be redeemed or followed, studying our virtues only in subservience to their interest. But the Governor, informed of our combats, of the self-devotion of Mirza, and of my despair, advanced towards us as an angel of light. 'Be free!' said he to us both; 'I give you back to your country and to your love. So much greatness of soul would have shamed the Europeans who had called you their slaves!'

"They soon took off my irons, I embraced his knees, blessing, in my heart, his goodness, as if he had sacrificed his legitimate rights. But ought usurpers, in renouncing their injustice, to expect they should rank as benefactors? I rose, and believed that, like myself, Mirza was at the feet of the Governor, but saw her at some distance seated under a tree in profound thought. I ran towards her. What love, what admiration, what gratitude, did I feel and express at the same time! 'Ximeo,' said she, 'there is no longer time for this. My misery is too deeply engraved to be obliterated by thy hand. I cannot hear thy voice without shuddering with sorrow; and thy presence freezes in my veins the blood which once flowed only for thee. Impassioned hearts know only extremes. When thou acquainted me with thy lot, I doubted of it for a long time. Thou mightest return. I should have believed that thy inconstancy had been a dream; but now, to annihilate this remembrance, I pierce the heart from which it cannot be effaced.' In pronouncing these words, the mortal dart pierced her bosom. Gods! who at that time suspended my life, have you prolonged it only the more to avenge Mirza by the protracted punishment of my grief? During a whole month the chain of remembrance of thought was entirely interrupted. I sometimes believe myself in another world, the hall of which is the remembrance of the first. Ourika made me promise that I

would not attempt my life. The Governor has convinced me that I must live to be useful to my unhappy countrymen, and to respect the last wishes of Mirza, who conjured me, in dying, to take care of myself, to be consoled for her sake. I have obeyed. I have enclosed in the tomb the remains of her whom I love, though she is no more; of her whom I knew not in life. There, when the sun sets, when Nature seems dressed in mourning, when universal silence allows me to attend to nothing but my own sad thoughts, prostrate upon her tomb I feel the indulgence of misery, the full feeling of my trouble. My raised imagination sometimes creates phantoms; and I believe I see her, but never as an irritated lover. I hear her console and partake of my grief. In fact, uncertain as to our future state, I respect the remembrance of Mirza in my heart, and fear that in inflicting death upon myself I should annihilate all that remains of hers. Two years are passed; and you are the only being to whom I have confided my grief; but I expect not your pity. Should a barbarian be pitied who caused the death of such a being as he laments? Promise me only that you will never forget the name of Mirza; tell it to your children; and preserve after my death the remembrance of this angel of love, this victim of misfortune."

On finishing this recital a gloomy melancholy was depicted over the charming countenance of Ximeo. I was bathed in tears and attempted to speak. "Can you believe," said he, "that it is possible to console me? Can you conceive that any thoughts respecting my misery have not been suggested by your own heart? I have been wishing to inform you of these circumstances; but I knew full well you could not soften them. I should die were the remembrance taken away. Remorse with its burning sterile pains would usurp the place and entirely occupy my heart; Farewell; I thank you for having heard me."

His gloomy calm, his despair, not vented in tears, readily

convinced me that every effort would be in vain. I dared not to address him on the subject; for there is something sacred in misery, and I quitted him with a heart full of bitterness, to accomplish my promise, to recount this history, and, as far as I am able, to perpetuate the unfortunate name of Mirza.

FRANÇOIS AUGUSTE DE CHATEAUBRIAND

(1768–1848)

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THE LAST OF THE ABENCERRAGES

WHEN Bobadil, last king of Granada, was forced to leave the kingdom of his fathers, he halted on the summit of Padul. From that hill-top the unhappy ruler saw the sea he was to cross on his way to Africa. On the other hand he saw Vega and the Jenil, on whose banks arose the tents of Ferdinand and Isabella. At the sight of that fair country, and of the cypresses that still remained here and there to mark some Moslem tomb, tears came into his eyes. The Sultana Ayesha who accompanied him in his exile, along with the nobles who once had formed his court, said to him, "Weep like a woman for the kingdom you could not defend like a man!" They came down from the mountain, and Granada was hidden from their eyes for ever.

The Moors of Spain, who shared the lot of their king, were scattered in Africa. The tribes of the Zegris and Gomeles took up their abode in the kingdom of Fez, from whence they had sprung in the beginning. The Vanegas and Alabes stayed on the coast from Oran to Algiers, and the Abencerrages settled round about Tunis. In sight of the ruins of Carthage they founded a colony, which is known even now among the Moors of Africa for the grace of its manners and the lenience of its laws.

Their new home these tribes filled with memories of the old country. The Paradise of Granada was still alive in their recollection. Mothers repeated its name to the babes upon their breasts; they rocked them to sleep with ballads

of Zegris and the Abencerrages. Every fifth day they prayed in the mosque, turning towards Granada; they called upon Allah to take back his chosen people to that land of delight. In vain the land of the lotus-eaters offered to the exiles its fruit, its waters, its green grass and bright sun. Away from the Scarlet Towers of the palace of Granada no fruits were sweet, no streams were clear, no grass was fresh, no sun worthy to be looked upon. If the plains of the Begrada were pointed out to an exile he shook his head and sighed, " Granada ! "

The Abencerrages above all others kept the tenderest and most faithful memory of their home. They had bitterly regretted leaving the scene of their glory and the shores that had so often echoed to their war-cry, " Honour and love." Since in the desert they could no longer wield the lance nor in a colony of farmers don the helm, they devoted themselves to the study of herbs, a calling held by the Arabs as equal to that of arms. Thus the race of warriors, who once gave wounds, now studied to heal them. In this they preserved something of their ancient skill, for the knights themselves often bound the wounds of enemies whom they had struck down.

The hut of this family which in time past dwelt in palaces was not among those of the other exiles at the foot of the Mamelife. It was built among the ruins of Carthage itself, by the sea, upon the spot where St. Louis died, stretched on his penitential couch of ashes, and where there is to-day a Moslem hermitage. On the walls of the hut were hung shields of lion-skin, bearing on a field azure two savage figures crushing a town with a club. Round this device were the words, " It is a trifling task "—arms and device of the Abencerrages. Their lances adorned with blue and white pennons, their hooded mantles and tunics of satin slashed, were ranged near the shields, and shone among scimitars and daggers. Here were hung gauntlets, snaffles set with jewels, great silver stirrups, long swords with

scabbards embroidered by the hands of princesses, and golden spurs which queens of romance, like Yseult, Guinevere and Oriana, had buckled on their brave knights. Beneath these spoils of glory tables were spread with spoils of a peaceful life; plants plucked on the heights of Atlas and in the desert of Sahara, or even brought from the plains of Granada. Some were for healing the ills of the body, others had power to cure the sorrows of the soul. Above all, the Abencerrages prized those that served to soothe vain regrets, to drive away foolish dreams and happiness for ever springing up and for ever deceived. Unhappily these herbs had the opposite virtues, and often the scent of a flower from home wrought like poison on the noble exiles.

Twenty-four years had gone by since the taking of Granada. In that short time fourteen of the Abencerrages had died from the effects of the new climate, by the mishaps of a wandering life, and above all from grief that silently undermined men's strength. One single scion remained, the only hope of that illustrious house. Aben Hamet bore the name of that Abencerrage who had been accused by the Zegris of having charmed away the heart of the Sultana Alfaima. In him all the beauty, the bravery, the courtesy and generosity of his ancestors was mingled with the twilight glow, the slight touch of melancholy, that comes from misfortune bravely borne. He was only twenty-two when he lost his father, and he then resolved on making a pilgrimage to the country of his ancestors to satisfy the longing of his heart and to accomplish a plan he had formed but carefully hid from his mother.

He took ship from the quay at Tunis; a favourable wind sped him to Cartagena; he landed and took the road to Granada, saying that he was an Arab physician come to seek for herbs among the rocks of the Sierra Nevada. Quietly mounted on a mule, he travelled slowly through the land where once the Abencerrages were wont to career on war-like steeds. A guide walked in front, leading two other

mules, hung round with bells and tufts of many-coloured wools. Aben Hamet crossed the great heaths and palm forests of the kingdom of Murcia. By the age of the trees he judged them to have been planted by his fathers, and his heart was pierced with regret. There rose a tower where a sentinel had watched in the wars between Moors and Christians. Yonder was seen a ruin whose architecture proclaimed its Moorish origin; another cause for grief to one of his race. He alighted from his mule, and, under the pretence of looking for herbs, hid himself a while among the ruins to give free course to his tears. Then he took the road again, dreaming to the sound of the mule-bells and the monotonous song of his guide, who never stopped his long ballad but to encourage his mules, naming them "beautiful" and "brave," or to rebuke them, calling them "lazy" and "stubborn."

Flocks of sheep, that a shepherd led as a captain leads an army, on the yellow, untilled plain, and a few lonely travellers, far from giving life to the road, only served to make it seem sadder and more desolate. Every traveller had a sword in his belt, and all were wrapped in cloaks, while large hats partly hid their faces. They greeted Aben Hamet in passing: he heard nothing of their greeting but the name of God, and the words lord and knight. In the evening at the inn he took his place among the strangers, undisturbed by any rude curiosity. No one spoke to him. His turban, his dress and his arms roused no interest. Since Allah had so willed that the Moors of Spain should lose their beautiful home, Aben Hamet could not help admiring the dignified men who had conquered it.

Still livelier emotions awaited him at the end of his journey. Granada is built at the foot of the Sierra Nevada, on two high hills, separated by a deep valley. The houses, placed on the slope of the hills, in the depth of the valley, give the town the appearance of a half-open pomegranate, whence its name. Two rivers, the Jenil and the Douro, of

which one rolls over golden sands and the other over sands of silver, wash the feet of the hills, and then, joining, wind through the midst of a plain called the Vega; this plain overlooked by Granada is covered with vines, pomegranates, figs, mulberries and orange trees, and is surrounded by mountains of wonderful forms and colours. A magic sky, a clear delicious air, bring to the soul a mysterious languor which the traveller, however short his visit, can hardly withstand. In that country one feels that the tender passions would soon have smothered the heroic, if love, true love, were not always the mate of glory.

When Aben Hamet saw the tops of the first buildings of Granada his heart beat with such violence that he was forced to stop his mule. He crossed his arms on his breast, and, with his eyes fixed upon the sacred city, he remained mute and motionless. The guide stopped, and as all lofty sentiments are easily understood by a Spaniard, he seemed touched, and guessed that this was a Moor revisiting his ancient home. At last Aben Hamet broke silence.

"Guide," said he, "blessings on thee! Hide not the truth from me, for peaceful were the waves on the day of thy birth and the moon was at the new. What are those towers that shine like stars above a green wood?"

"It is the Alhambra," answered the Guide.

"And that other castle, on that other hill?" asked Aben Hamet.

"It is the Generalife," replied the Spaniard. "There is in that castle a garden planted with myrtles, where, they say, the Abencerrage was caught with the Sultana Alfaima. Farther on you see Albaizyn, and nearer at hand the Scarlet Towers."

Every word of the guide pierced the heart of Aben Hamet. How cruel was the fate that forced him to turn to strangers for the names of his fathers' monuments, and hear from indifferent lips the history of his race and friends. To put an end to the reflections of Aben Hamet, the guide said, "Come

on, Sir Moor, come on! It is the will of God. Is not Francis himself to-day a prisoner in our Madrid? It is the will of God." He took off his hat, crossed himself, and whipped up his mules. The Abencerrage, urging on his own beast, cried, "It was written," and they went down towards Granada.

They passed by the great ash tree, famous for the battle between Monsa and the Grand Master of Calatrava, under the last king of Granada. They went round the walk of Alameida and entered the city by the gate of Elvira. They climbed the Rambla and soon reached an open space, surrounded by houses in the Moorish style. There was in that place a khan for the Moors of Africa, whom the silk trade of the Vega brought in crowds to Granada. Thither the guide led Aben Hamet.

The Moor was too much excited to rest a moment in his new dwelling. He was distracted by the thought of his country. Unable to quiet the feelings that troubled his heart, at midnight he went out to wander in the streets of Granada. Peering into the darkness and groping with his hands he tried to recognize some of the monuments that old men had so often described to him. Maybe that high building, whose walls he dimly saw through the gloom, was once the home of the Abencerrages. Maybe it was on that silent square that those festal revels took place which invested Granada with more than earthly brilliance. There processions had marched gorgeously clothed in brocade, galleys had passed full of flowers and weapons, dragons spitting fire and concealing noble warriors in their recesses—so many ingenious contrivances of pleasure and gallantry.

But, alas! instead of the sound of music, of the noise of trumpets and songs of love, deep silence reigned around Aben Hamet. The dumb city had changed its dwellers, and the conquerors now lay in the place of the conquered. "They sleep, the proud Spaniards," cried the young Moor angrily, "beneath the roofs whence they drove my fathers

forth. And, I, an Abencerrage, I watch unknown, alone, forsaken, at the gate of my father's palace."

He pondered on human fate, on the changes of fortune, on the fall of empires, on Granada, surprised by her enemies in the midst of her pleasure, and suddenly exchanging flower-garlands for fetters. He seemed to see her citizens leaving their homes in festal attire, like revellers who, dishevelled and half clothed, are suddenly driven from the banquet hall by an outburst of flames.

All these pictures, all these thoughts, crowded into the soul of Aben Hamet. Full of pain and sorrow, he dreamed of fulfilling the project that had brought him to Granada, until they caught him unawares. He had lost his way; he found himself far from the khan, in a distant suburb of the town. Everything was asleep; no sound broke the stillness of the streets; the doors and windows of the houses were shut; only the voice of the cock told of the return of toil and pain to the dwellings of the poor.

After wandering long without being able to find his way, Aben Hamet heard a door open. He saw a young woman come forth, dressed almost like the Gothic queens carved on the monuments of our old abbeys. Her black bodice, ornamented with jet, girded her dainty figure. Her short skirt, scanty and without folds, showed a neat leg and a pretty foot. A black mantilla was thrown over her head; with her left hand she held it close like a wimple beneath her chin, so that of her face nothing could be seen but large eyes and rosy mouth. A duenna followed her, a page carried a prayer-book before her, and at some distance two footmen, wearing her livery, followed the fair unknown. She was going to morning prayer, which was announced by the tinkling of a bell from a neighbouring minster.

Aben Hamet thought he saw the Angel Israfil, or the youngest of the houris. The Spaniard, not less astonished, looked at him. His turban, robe and arms set off a noble countenance. Recovering from her first surprise, with a

grace and freedom peculiar to women of that country, she signed to the stranger to come near. "Sir Moor," said she, "you seem newly come to Granada: have you lost your way?"

"Queen of flowers," replied Aben Hamet, "delight of the eyes of men, O Christian slave, fairer than the maids of Georgia, thou hast guessed aright. I am a stranger in this town: lost among these palaces, I cannot find the khan of the Moors. May Mohammed touch thy heart and reward thy hospitality!"

"The Moors are known for gallantry," answered the Spaniard with the sweetest of smiles; "but I am neither queen of flowers nor a slave, nor am I anxious to be commended to Mohammed. Follow me, Sir knight, and I will lead you to the Moorish khan."

She walked rapidly before the Moor, and led him to the door of the khan, pointed it out with a wave of her hand, disappeared behind a palace, and was seen no more.

What makes the happiness of human life? No more did his country solely and entirely fill the heart of Aben Hamet. Granada was no more to him deserted, forsaken, widowed and alone; she was dearer than ever to his heart. But it was a new spell that beautified her ruins; another charm was now mingled with the memory of his forefathers. He found the place where rested the ashes of the Abencerrages, but while he prayed, while he prostrated himself, while he shed filial tears, he fancied that the Spanish girl might have passed over those graves, and no longer thought his ancestors so very unhappy.

In vain he tried to think of nothing but the pilgrimage to the home of his fathers. In vain he wandered over the slopes of Douro and Jenil to gather herbs at sunrise; the flower he now sought was the fair Christian. What useless pains he took to discover the palace of his enchantress! How often he tried to retrace the streets through which his goddess-guide had led him! How often he thought he

recognized the tone of that bell, the note of that cock, that had sounded near the dwelling of the Spanish maiden! Mocked by such sounds, he hastened in the direction whence they came, but the magic palace never presented itself to his sight. Often the sameness of the dress of the women in Granada gave him a moment of hope; from afar all Christian women were like the mistress of his heart; near, not one had either her beauty or her grace. Aben Hamet at last explored even the churches to find the strange maid; he actually made his way to the tomb of Ferdinand and Isabella, but that was the greatest sacrifice he had ever made to love.

One day he was gathering herbs in the Douro valley. On the south was a hill from whose flowery slopes arose the walls of the Alhambra and the gardens of the Generalife. To the north was a hill adorned by the Albaizyn, with smiling orchards and populous caves. On the extreme west of the valley the bell-towers of Granada could be perceived, arising in a group among evergreen oaks and cypress trees. At the other end, to the east, the eye was met by convents on the summits of rocks, hermitages and the ruins of ancient Illiberia, and far away the peaks of the Sierra Nevada. The Douro flowed in the midst of the valley, and its course was marked by newly-built mills, noisy falls, the broken arches of a Roman aqueduct and the remains of a Moorish bridge.

Aben Hamet was no longer happy or unhappy enough to taste to the full the charm of solitude. He passed through those magic places distracted and indifferent. Walking at hazard, he followed an alley of trees that wound up the slope of the hill of Albaizyn. A country house, surrounded by a grove of orange trees, soon came in sight. Approaching the grove, he heard the sounds of a voice and of a guitar. Between the voice, the features, and the look of a woman there is a certain connection that never escapes a man in love. "It is my houri," said Aben Hamet, and he listened with a beating heart; at the name of the Abencerrages, several times

repeated his heart beat even faster. The unknown was singing a Castilian ballad that told the story of the Abencerrages and the Zegris. Aben Hamet could withstand his emotion no longer. He burst through the hedge of myrtles; and found himself in the midst of a company of frightened girls, who fled. The Spanish maiden, who had been singing, and still held her guitar, cried, "It is the Moorish nobleman," and called back her playmates. "Favourite of the djinns," said Aben Hamet, "I have sought thee as the Arab seeks a spring of water in the midday heat. I heard the sound of a guitar; thou wast singing the heroes of my country. I knew thee by the beauty of thy voice, and I bring to thy feet the heart of Aben Hamet."

"For my part," said Doña Blanca, "it was in the thought of you that I sang the ballad of the Abencerrages. Since I saw you, I have imagined that those Moorish knights must have been like you."

A slight blush rose to her brow as she spoke these words. Aben Hamet felt ready to fall at the feet of the young Christian maiden, to tell her he was the last of the Abencerrages. But a remnant of prudence held him back; he feared that his name, too well known in Granada, would cause trouble with the governor. The Moorish war was but lately ended, and the presence of an Abencerrage at that moment would give the Spaniards reasonable grounds for fear. It was not that Aben Hamet was afraid of any danger, but he trembled at the thought of having to part for ever from the daughter of Don Rodriguez.

Doña Blanca came of a family that traced its origin to the Cid de Bivar and Ximena, daughter of Count Gomez of Gormas. The descendants of the victor of Valencia the Beautiful fell, by the thanklessness of the court of Castile, into great poverty. During several centuries it was even thought to be extinct, so obscure had it become. But about the time of the conquest of Granada a last scion of the race of Bivar, the forefather of Blanca, made himself known, less

by his titles than by the brilliance of his bravery. After the expulsion of the infidels, Ferdinand gave the descendants of the Cid the estates of several Moorish families, and created him Duke of Santa Fé. The new duke settled at Granada, and died still young, leaving an only son already married, Don Rodriguez, the father of Blanca.

Doña Theresa de Xeres, the wife of Don Rodriguez, gave birth to a son, who was given the name of Rodriguez, like all his forefathers, but he was called Don Carlos to distinguish him from his father. The great events that Don Carlos had seen from his earliest years, the dangers to which he had been exposed almost from childhood, deepened and toned a character naturally given to austerity. He was barely fourteen years old when he accompanied Cortez to Mexico. He underwent all the dangers, he was witness of all the horrors of that surprising venture; he was present at the fall of the last king of a kingdom till then unknown. Three years after that event Don Carlos was in Europe; at the battle of Pavia he saw the honour and bravery of a Christian king fall beneath the blows of fortune! The sight of the New World, long voyages over unknown seas, the spectacle of revolutions and changes of fortune had strongly affected his religious and melancholy imagination. He entered the order of the knights of Calatrava, and, renouncing marriage in spite of the prayers of Don Rodriguez, left all his worldly wealth to his sister.

Blanca de Bivar, only sister of Don Carlos, and much younger than he, was the idol of her father. She had lost her mother, and entered on her eighteenth year when Aben Hamet appeared at Granada. That bewitching girl was full of fascination. Her voice was charming, her dancing more airy than the evening breeze. Sometimes she delighted, like Armida, to drive a chariot; sometimes she flew on the back of the swiftest steed of Andalusia, like those enchanting fairies that appeared to Tristram and Galahault in the forest. Athens would have taken her for Aspasia, Paris

for Diane de Poitiers, who was then in her first brilliance at the court of Francis. But with the charms of a Frenchwoman she had all the passion of a Spaniard, and her natural gaiety took nothing from the certainty, constancy, strength and loftiness of her heart.

Hearing the cries of the Spanish maidens when Aben Hamet burst through the grove, Don Rodriguez came hurrying out. "Father," said Blanca, "here is the Moorish knight of whom I told you. He heard me singing, and knew me again, and he came into the garden to thank me for having shown him the way."

The Duke of Santa Fé received the Moor with the grave yet frank courtesy of a Spaniard. Among that nation are found none of those servile manners, none of those turns of speech which tell of meanness of thought and degradation of the soul. The speech of lord and peasant is the same, their greeting the same, their compliments, habits and manners are the same. Even as the trustfulness and kindness of this people are without bounds, so is their revenge terrible when wronged. With a heroic courage, with a patience proof against everything, incapable of yielding to ill fortune, they must either conquer or be crushed. They have little wit and humour, but lofty passions take the place of the brilliance that comes of subtlety and abundance of ideas. A Spaniard who passes the day without speaking, who sees nothing and wishes to see nothing, who has read nothing, studied nothing, judged nothing, will find by mere greatness of soul the strength he needs in the moment of trouble.

It was the birthday of Don Rodriguez, and Blanca was giving her father a Tertullia, or little festival, in the lovely solitude. The Duke of Santa Fé invited Aben Hamet to sit among the maidens, who were amused at the turban and robe of the stranger. Mats of velvet were brought, and the Moor reclined upon them in his native fashion. They questioned him about his country and adventures, and he answered with spirit and

gaiety. He spoke the purest Castilian, and might have been taken for a Spaniard if he had not always said, "thou" instead of "you." The word was so sweet in his mouth that Blanca could not help a secret jealousy whenever he addressed it to one of her companions.

A train of servants appeared, bringing chocolate, tarts of fruit, and little cakes of sugar from Malaga, white like snow and porous and light as sponges. After the meal, the company begged Blanca to perform one of the dances in which she outdid the most skilful gipsy-women. She could not but yield to the wishes of her friends. Aben Hamet had kept silence, but his pleading looks spoke for his lips. Blanca chose a Zambra, an expressive dance borrowed by the Spaniards from the Moors.

One of the girls began to play the tune of the strange dance on the guitar. The daughter of Don Rodriguez doffed her veil and fastened castanets of ebony to her white hands. Her black hair fell in curls on her marble neck; her lip and eyes smiled in unison, and her colour was heightened by the beating of her heart. All at once she sounded the clattering ebony, beat the measure thrice, struck up the song of Zambra, and, mingling her voice with the sound of the guitar, leapt into the dance like a flash of light.

What variety in her steps! What grace in all her movements! Now she quickly lifts her arms, now she lets them gently fall. Sometimes she springs as if intoxicated with pleasure, and then draws back as if bowed down with grief. She turns her head, seeming to call to one unseen, lifts modestly a rosy cheek for the bridegroom's kiss; flies ashamed, and returns radiant and happy; walks with a stately and almost martial step, and then hovers once more over the lawn. The harmony of her steps, her song, and the sound of the guitar was perfect. Blanca's voice, slightly subdued, had that kind of tone that moves the passions in the very depths of the soul. The Spanish music, consisting of sighs and quick movements, of sad refrains and abruptly ending songs, presents a curious

mixture of merriment and sadness. The music of that dance fixed for ever the fate of the last Abencerrage; it would have sufficed to touch a heart less love-sick than his own.

The company returned in the evening to Granada, along the Douro Valley. Don Rodriguez, charmed by the noble and polished manners of Aben Hamet, would not leave him until he had promised to come often to amuse Blanca with his wonderful tales of the East. The Moor, only too happily, accepted the invitation of the Duke of Santa Fé, and on the morrow he went to the palace where breathed the one whom he loved more than the light of day. Blanca soon found herself enmeshed in a deep passion; the more because a passion such as this was the last thing she had thought possible. To love an infidel, a Moor, an unknown, seemed to her so strange that she took no pains to resist the evil that began to steal into her blood. But no sooner did she know what had befallen her than she accepted the inevitable like a true Spaniard. The dangers and cares she foresaw did not frighten her back from the edge of the abyss, nor argue long with her heart. She said to herself, "Only let Aben Hamet become a Christian and love me, and I will follow him to the ends of the earth."

The Moor, on his side, felt all the power of an irresistible attraction. He only lived for Blanca. He thought no longer of the plans that had brought him to Granada. It was easy to obtain the knowledge that he had come to seek, but all beside his love had vanished from his eyes. He even feared any light that might bring a change into his life. He asked nothing: he wished to know nothing. He said, "Only let Blanca become a Moslem and love me, and I will be her slave to my last breath."

Aben Hamet and Blanca, thus firm in their determinations, needed but the occasion to make known their feelings. It was just then the most lovely time of year. "You have never yet seen the Alhambra," said the Duke of Santa Fé's daughter to the Moor. "If I may believe some word that you have let fall, your family came in the beginning from Granada. Per-

haps you would like to visit the palace of your ancient kings. I will be your guide this evening!"

Aben Hamet swore by the Prophet that no walk could please him more.

The hour fixed for the pilgrimage to the Alhambra was come. The daughter of Don Rodriguez mounted a white pony, well used to climb the rocks like a deer. Aben Hamet accompanied the radiant Spanish girl on an Andalusian steed, saddled and bridled after the Turkish manner. In the rapid gallop of the young Moor his purple robe flew out behind him, his scimitar rattled on the high saddle, and the wind waved the plume that surmounted his turban. The people, delighted with his grace of bearing, said on seeing him pass, "There is an infidel prince whom Doña Blanca is going to convert."

At first they followed a long street, still called by the name of a noble Moorish family. The street led to the outer wall of the Alhambra. Then they went through an elm grove, and came to a fountain, soon finding themselves before the enclosure of the palace of Boabdil. In a wall, flanked by towers and topped with battlements, was a door called the Door of Judgment. They passed through this, and proceeded by a narrow path winding between high walls and half-ruined buildings. The path led them to the square of the Algibes, close to which Charles V was then erecting a palace. Thence, turning to the north, they halted in a deserted court, at the foot of a bare wall, crumbling with age. Aben Hamet sprang lightly to the ground, and offered Blanca his hand to dismount. The servants knocked at a forsaken door, the threshold of which was hidden by the grass. The door opened and exposed to instant view the secret recesses of the Alhambra.

All the charm, all the regrets of his country, mingled with the spells of love, seized the heart of the last Abencerrage. Motionless and dumb, he turned his astonished gaze on that dwelling of the djinns. He seemed to be carried to the gate of one of those palaces of which one reads in Arabian tales. Aerial balconies, watercourses of white marble, edged with

lemon trees in bloom, fountains, lonely courts on all sides met the eyes of Aben Hamet; and across the long arches of the doorway he beheld other images and new enchantments. The blue of a most lovely sky peeped between columns bearing a chain of Gothic arches, and the walls, covered with arabesques, imitated the stuffs of the East, on which some captive Moorish woman, slave and wife, had embroidered her fancies to beguile the loneliness of the harem. An air of voluptuousness, austerity and heroism seemed to breathe in that wonderful building; a sort of cloister of love, a mysterious retreat, where Moorish kings had tasted all the pleasures and forgotten all the duties of life.

After some moments of astonishment and silence the two lovers entered the abode of vanished power and past delight. First they went past the Hall of the Mesucar, amid the scent of flowers and the coolness of fountains. Then they found their way into the Court of Lions. Aben Hamet's emotion increased at every step. "Hadst thou not filled my soul with delight," he said to Blanca, "with how much bitterness should I have been obliged to ask thee, a Spaniard, the story of these halls. Ah, this place is made for an abode of bliss, and I——"

The Moor saw the name of Boabdil worked in the mosaics. "O my king," he cried, "what has become of thee? Where shalt I find thee in thy ruined Alhambra?" and tears of faith, loyalty and honour filled his eyes.

"Your ancient masters," said Blanca, "or rather the kings of your fathers, were ungrateful." "What matters it?" said Aben Hamet, "they were unfortunate."

As he said those words Blanca led him into a little chamber that seemed to be the very sanctuary of the temple of love. Nothing could equal the elegance of that place. The whole roof, painted in blue and gold and formed of pierced arabesques, let in the light as if through a net of blossoms. A fountain sparkled in the centre of the building, and its waters, falling in spray, were caught in an alabaster basin. "Aben Hamet," said the daughter of Don Rodriguez, "look well at

that fountain. It received the disfigured heads of the Abencerrages. You still can see on the marble a stain of the blood of those unhappy men whom Boabdil sacrificed to his suspicions. Thus in your country do they treat men who lead silly women astray."

Aben Hamet was no longer listening to Blanca. He had prostrated himself, and was reverently kissing the blood-stains of his ancestors. He rose and said, "O Blanca, I swear by the blood of those knights to love thee with the constancy, faith, and ardour of an Abencerrage."

"Then you love me?" asked Blanca, clasping her two pretty hands, and lifting her eyes to heaven. "But have you not bethought yourself that you are an infidel, a Moor, and an enemy, and that I am a Christian and a Spaniard?"

"O holy Prophet," said Aben Hamet, "be witness of my vows."

Blanca interrupted him; "What trust would you have me put in the vows of a persecutor of my God? Do you know whether I love you? Who gave you the audacity to address me thus?"

Aben Hamet, confused, made answer: "It is true I am only thy slave. Thou hast not chosen me as thy knight."

"Moor," said Blanca, "let us be frank; you have seen in my eyes that I love you: my fondness for you is above all bounds; be a Christian, and nothing can prevent my being yours. But if the daughter of the Duke of Santa Fé can speak to you so freely, you can judge even by that that she can control herself, and that an enemy of Christendom shall never have any power over her."

Aben Hamet, in a transport of passion, grasped Blanca's hands, laid them upon his turban, and then upon his heart. "Allah is great," he cried, "and Aben Hamet is happy. O Mohammed, let this Christian know thy law, and nothing can——"

"You blaspheme," said Blanca; "let us go."

She leant on the arm of the Moor and approached the

Fountain of Twelve Lions, that gives its name to one of the courts of the Alhambra. "Stranger," said the innocent Spanish maid, "when I look at your robe, your turban and your arms, and when I think of our love, I seem to see the shade of the noble Abencerrage walking in this lonely spot with the unhappy Alfaima. Tell me the meaning of the Arab writing carved upon the marble of that fountain."

Aben Hamet read these words: "The fair princess who walks adorned with pearls in her garden, so marvellously increases its beauty——" The rest was defaced.

"It was for you that the writing was made," said Aben Hamet. "Beloved sultana, these palaces were never so fair in their prime as now in their decay. Listen to the sound of the fountain, where the moss has checked the flow of the waters. Look at the gardens appearing above the half-ruined arches. Gaze upon the star of day that sets behind the porticoes. How sweet it is to wander in this place with thee! Thy words make these haunts odorous like roses at a wedding-feast. With what delight I hear in thy speech some accents of my father's tongue! Even the murmur of thy gown upon the marble makes me tremble. The breeze is sweet only because it has caressed thy hair. Thou art fair as the spirit of my country amid these ruins. But may Aben Hamet hope to gain thy heart? What is he beside thee? He has scoured the mountains with his father, he knows the herbs of the desert; alas, not one of them can heal the wound that thou hast made! He bears arms, but he is no knight. I used to tell myself, the wave of the sea that sleeps in shelter in the hollow of the rock is still and dumb, while near at hand the great sea is loud and stormy; Aben Hamet, so will thylife be, quiet, peaceful, passed by in an unknown corner of the earth, while the sultan's court is shaken by storms. I said that, young Christian maid, and thou hast proved to me that the tempest can trouble even the pool in the hollow of the rock."

Blanca listened with delight to this language so new to her, with an Eastern flavour that seemed so well to fit the abode of

fairies where she was walking with her lover. Love penetrated every region of her heart; she felt her knees shake, and was forced to lean more heavily upon the arm of her guide. Aben Hamet supported the sweet burden, and repeated, walking on: "Ah, why am I no glorious Abencerrage?"

"You would please me less," said Blanca, "for I should be the more tormented. Remain obscure and live for me alone. Often a famous knight forgets his love for fame."

"Thou wouldst not have that danger to fear," answered Aben Hamet.

"And how would you love me, were you an Abencerrage?" said the daughter of Ximena.

"I would love thee," said the Moor, "more than glory and only less than honour."

The sun had set below the horizon during the walk of the two lovers. They had traversed the whole of the Alhambra. What memories filled the thoughts of Aben Hamet! Here the sultana had received by secret inlets the smoke of perfumes burned below her: there, in a hidden chamber, she was wont to robe herself in all the magnificence of the Orient. And it was Blanca, it was a beloved woman, who told the story to the handsome youth she worshipped.

The moon, rising, poured its doubtful light into the forsaken shrines and deserted squares of the Alhambra. Its pale rays traced upon the grass of the gardens, and upon the walls of the chambers, the lacework of aery buildings, the arches of cloisters, the moving shadows of gushing waters, and of shrubs rocked in the evening breeze. The nightingale sang in a cypress that pierced the dome of a ruined mosque, and echoes took up its plaint. Aben Hamet wrote the name of Blanca by moonlight on the marble of the Hall of the Two Sisters. He traced the name in Arab letters, so that travellers should have yet one more secret to unravel in that palace of mysteries.

"Moor, this is a dreadful place," said Blanca; "let us leave it. My fate is fixed for evermore. Remember these words:

Remain Moslem, and I am your despairing lover; be Christian, and I am your happy bride!"

Aben Hamet answered: "Remain Christian, and I am your hopeless slave; be Moslem, and I am your proud bridegroom!" So those two noble lovers left the palace of danger.

Blanca's passion grew from day to day, and that of Aben Hamet increased with equal vehemence. He was so happy to be loved for himself alone, to owe the feelings he inspired to no outside cause, that he never told the secret of his birth to the daughter of the Duke of Santa Fé. He took a subtle pleasure in thinking he would tell her he bore a noble name on the day when she consented to give him her hand. But suddenly he was called back to Tunis; his mother, seized with an incurable sickness, wished to embrace her son and give him her blessing before she died. He went to Blanca's palace. "Sultana," he said, "my mother is dying. She asks for me to close her eyes. Wilt thou keep thy love for me?"

"You are leaving me!" answered Blanca, paling. "Shall I ever see you again?"

"Come," said Aben Hamet. "I wish to take and make a promise which death alone can undo. Come with me."

They went out and came to a burial-ground, once that of the Moors. Here and there still were funeral columns, round which the sculptor in ancient times had carved a turban, but the Christians had since replaced the turban with a cross. Aben Hamet led Blanca to one of these columns.

"Blanca," he said, "my fathers rest here. I swear by their ashes to love thee till the day the Angel of judgment shall call me to the court of Allah. I promise thee never to give my heart to any other woman, and to take thee to wife as soon as thou shalt know the holy light of the Prophet. Every year at this time I will come back to Granada to see if thou hast kept thy faith with me and whether thou wilt renounce thy errors."

"And I," said Blanca, in tears, "I will await thee year by year. I will keep the faith I have sworn until my last breath,

and will take thee as my husband when the God of the Christians, more powerful than she who loves thee, shall have touched thy infidel heart."

Aben Hamet departed. The winds carried him to the shores of Africa. His mother had lately died. He wept for her, and kissed her coffin. The months flew by; now wandering among the ruins of Carthage, now seated on the tomb of St. Louis, the exiled Abencerrage longed for the day that should take him back to Granada. The day dawned at last. He embarked on a vessel, and turned her prow towards Malaga. With what delight, with what joy mingled with fear he saw the first headlands of Spain. Was Blanca waiting for him on those shores? Did she still remember the poor Arab who never ceased to love her beneath the desert palms?

The daughter of the Duke of Santa Fé was not unfaithful to her vows. She had begged her father to take her to Malaga. From the heights of the mountains that surrounded that desolate coast she followed with her eyes the distant vessels and the flying sails. During a storm she watched with fear the sea lifted by the winds; and she loved to lose herself among the clouds and expose herself in dangerous places, to feel herself bathed by the same waves, swept away by the same tempest that threatened the life of Aben Hamet. When she saw the wailing seagull skim the waves with its great curved wings and fly towards the coast of Africa, she loaded it with all those messages of love, all those foolish wishes that come from a heart devoured by passion.

One day, when she was wandering upon the beach, she saw a long ship, whose high prow, leaning mast and lateen sail betokened the graceful spirit of the Moors. Blanca hastened to the port, and soon saw the foreign vessel enter, whitening the water with the rapidity of her course. A Moor in splendid raiment stood upon the deck. Behind him, two black slaves held by the bridle an Arab horse, whose smoking nostrils and tangled mane proclaimed his

fiery nature and the fear which the sound of the waves inspired in him. The bark arrived, lowered its sails, touched the wharf and came alongside. The Moor leapt ashore, and the clatter of his arms re-echoed along the quay. The slaves brought ashore the courser, dappled like a leopard, neighing and leaping for joy at feeling the earth again beneath his hoofs. Other slaves gently unloaded a basket in which was a gazelle, lying upon palm leaves. Her delicate legs were tied and folded beneath her, for fear of their being broken by the rocking of the ship. She had a collar of aloe-berries, and on a plate of gold that served to join the two ends of the collar were engraved in Arabic a name and a talisman.

Blanca recognized Aben Hamet; she did not wish to betray herself to the eyes of the crowd, so she sent Dorothea, one of her women, to tell the Abencerrage that she awaited him in the Moorish palace. At that moment he was presenting his firman to the governor, written in letters of azure on a precious parchment, and enclosed in a silken case. Dorothea approached him, and led the happy Abencerrage to the feet of Blanca. What joy to find each other faithful! What happiness to meet again after so long a parting! How many new vows of eternal love!

The two black slaves led the Numidian horse, which instead of a saddle had on its back a lion-skin bound by a girth of purple. The gazelle was brought. "Sultana," said Aben Hamet, "this is a deer of my country almost as agile as thyself."

Blanca loosed the charming creature, which seemed to thank her with the gentlest of looks. In Aben Hamet's absence, the daughter of the Duke of Santa Fé had learned Arabic, and her eyes filled as she read her own name upon the collar of the gazelle. The creature, free once more, could hardly stand on feet that had been bound so long. It lay on the ground and laid its head upon the knees of its mistress. Blanca fed it with fresh dates, and caressed that

desert fawn whose soft skin still kept the scent of the aloe and the Tunis rose.

The Abencerrage, the Duke of Santa Fé, and his daughter went together to Granada. The days of the happy pair went by like those of last year: the same walks, the same grief at the sight of his country, the same love, or rather a love always growing and always shared, and yet the same firmness of the lovers in the faith of their fathers. "Be a Christian," said Blanca; "Be a Moslem," said Aben Hamet. And so they parted once more without having given way to the passion that drew them one to the other.

Aben Hamet returned the third year, like those wandering birds that love brings back in the spring-time to our shores. He did not find Blanca at the port, but a letter from his lady-love told the faithful Arab of the departure of the Duke of Santa Fé for Madrid and the arrival at Granada of Don Carlos, accompanied by a French prisoner, a friend of Blanca's brother. The Moor felt his heart sink on reading the letter. He left Malaga for Granada full of the saddest forebodings. The mountains seemed lonely and terrible, and many a time he turned his head to look back at the sea he had lately crossed.

Blanca, during the absence of her father, could not leave the brother she loved: a brother who had given up all his worldly wealth for her, and whom she now saw after seven years of absence. Don Carlos had all the courage and all the pride of his people; fierce as the conquerors of the New World among whom he had first borne arms, fanatic as the Spanish knights who vanquished the Moors, he nursed in his heart a hate against the infidel, inherited with the blood of the Cid.

Thomas de Lautrec came of the noble house of Foix, in which beauty was the heirloom of the women and bravery the heritage of the men He was the younger brother of the Countess of Foix and of the brave and unfortunate Odet de Foix, Lord of Lautrec. At eighteen years of age Thomas

had been knighted by Bayard at that retreat which cost the life of the knight without fear and without reproach. Some time after he was desperately wounded and made prisoner at Pavia, in defending the chivalrous king who on that field lost all except honour. Don Carlos de Bivar, witnessing Lautrec's, had the wounds of the young Frenchman tended, and soon arose between them one of those heroic friendships founded on virtue and esteem. Francis I had returned to France, but Charles V had kept back his other prisoners. To Lautrec had fallen the honour of sharing the captivity of his king and of sleeping at his feet in prison. Remaining in Spain after his sovereign's departure, he had been entrusted, on his word of honour, to Don Carlos, who took him to Granada.

When Aben Hamet came to the palace of Don Rodriguez, and was brought into the hall where the Duke of Santa Fé's daughter sat, he felt torments till then unknown to him. At Doña Blanca's feet was seated a young man who gazed on her in silence in a kind of ecstasy. The youth wore long hose of buff leather and a doublet to match, tied by a sash from which hung a sword with fleur-de-lis mountings. A silken cloak was thrown over his shoulders, and his head was covered with a narrow-brimmed hat shaded with feathers; a ruffle of lace, folded on his chest, left his neck bare; moustaches, black as ebony, gave his naturally gentle face a manly and warlike character. Wide boots that fell in folds about his feet bore golden spurs, the mark of knighthood.

Another knight was standing at some distance apart, He was dressed like the first but seemed older. His air, stern though tense and passionate, inspired respect and fear. The red cross of Calatrava was embroidered on his doublet with this device, " For her and for my king."

An involuntary cry escaped Blanca's lips when she saw Aben Hamet. " Knights," she said at once, " here is the infidel of whom I told you; fear that he may overcome you.

The Abencerrages were like him, and no one surpassed them in loyalty, courage and gallantry."

Don Carlos came forward to Aben Hamet. "Sir Moor," he said, "my father and my sister have told me your name. You are said to be of a noble race; you yourself are distinguished for your courtesy. Charles II, my master, will soon make war upon Tunis, and I hope we shall meet upon the field of honour."

Aben Hamet laid his hand on his breast, seated himself on the ground without answering, and fixed his eyes on Blanca and Lautrec. The latter looked with the curiosity of his country at the magnificent dress, the glittering arms, and the beauty of the Moor. Blanca did not seem ill at ease; her whole soul was in her eyes; the Spanish girl, innocent of duplicity, did not try to hide the secret of her heart. After some moments of silence, Aben Hamet rose, bowed to the daughter of Don Rodriguez, and withdrew. Astonished at the bearing of the Moor and the looks of Blanca, Lautrec went out, with a suspicion that soon grew into a certainty.

Don Carlos remained alone with his sister.

"Blanca," he said, "explain yourself. Whence comes the trouble that the sight of the stranger causes you?"

"Brother," answered Blanca, "I love Aben Hamet, and if he will become a Christian my hand is his."

"What," cried Don Carlos, "you love Aben Hamet! The daughter of the Bivars loves a Moor, an infidel, an enemy whom we have driven forth from these palaces!"

"Don Carlos," replied Blanca, "I love Aben Hamet; Aben Hamet loves me; for three years he has been parted from me rather than deny the faith of his fathers. Nobility, honour and chivalry are in him, and I will adore him to my last breath."

Don Carlos was noble enough to feel that the resolve of Aben Hamet was generous, though he pitied the infidel's blindness.

" Unhappy Blanca," he said, " whither will this love lead thee? I had hoped that Lautrec, my friend, might become my brother."

" You were wrong," cried Blanca. " I cannot love that stranger. As for my feelings towards Aben Hamet, I am answerable to no one. Keep your vows of knighthood as I keep my vows of love, but be consoled with the thought that Blanca will never be the bride of an infidel."

" Then our race will vanish from off the earth," cried Don Carlos.

" It is yours to make it live again," said Blanca. " But, after all, what need of sons you will never see, and who will fall away from your virtue? Don Carlos, I feel that we are the last of our race. We are too far removed from the common order for our descendants to flourish after us. The Cid was our ancestor, he will be our posterity." Blanca left him.

Don Carlos hastened to Aben Hamet. " Moor," said he, " give up my sister or fight with me."

" Art thou sent by thy sister," answered Aben Hamet, " to ask me to give back the vows that she made to me? "

" No," said Don Carlos. " She loves you more than ever."

" Ah, worthy brother of Blanca," cried Aben Hamet, " I cannot but believe I owe all my happiness to thy race. O happy Aben Hamet! O joyous day! I thought Blanca faithless for the sake of that French knight."

" That is your misfortune," cried Don Carlos passionately, in reply. " Lautrec is my friend. But for you he would be my brother. Repay me for the tears you have caused my house to shed."

" I am willing," answered Aben Hamet; " but, borne of a race that has doubtless fought with thine, I am nevertheless no knight, and here is none can give me the rank which would permit thee to measure thyself with me without lowering thy dignity."

Don Carlos, struck by the words of the Moor, looked at him with mingled admiration and wrath; then suddenly—

"I myself will make you knight: you are worthy of it!"

Aben Hamet bent his knee before Don Carlos, who gave him the accolade, striking him thrice on the shoulder with the flat of his sword; and then he girded him with the very weapon which the Abencerrage would soon perhaps plunge into his breast. Such was ancient honour.

Both men leapt upon their steeds, left the walls of Granada, and hastened to the Fountain of the Pine. The duels of Moors and Christians had long since made that fountain famous. It was there that Malik Alabes had fought against Ponce de Leon, and the Grand Master of Calatrava had slain the valiant Abayados. There could still be seen the remnants of the arms of that Moorish knight, hung upon the pine branches, and on its bark could be seen some letters of his epitaph. Don Carlos pointed to the tomb, and said to Aben Hamet:

"Do as that brave infidel did, and receive baptism and death from my hand."

"Death perhaps," answered Aben Hamet. "There is but one God, and Mohammed is His prophet."

They then took the field and fell upon each other with fury. They had only their swords; Aben Hamet was less skilful in battle than Don Carlos, but the strength of his blade, tempered at Damascus, and the lightness of his Arab horse gave him an advantage over his enemy. He rode his steed like a Moor, and with his long sharp stirrup cut the right leg of Don Carlos' horse below the knee. The wounded animal fell, and Don Carlos, unhorsed by the lucky stroke, came upon Aben Hamet with uplifted sword. Aben Hamet sprang to earth and met his adversary fearlessly. He parried the first strokes of the Spaniard, who broke his sword on the Damascus steel. Twice mocked by fortune, Don Carlos shed tears of rage, and cried to his enemy,

"Strike, Moor, strike; Don Carlos disarmed defies thee, thee and all the infidel race!"

"Thou mayest kill me," answered the Abencerrage; "but I never dreamed of giving thee the least wound. I only wished to prove to thee that I was worthy to be thy brother, and to prevent thee from despising me."

At that moment a cloud of dust was seen. Lautrec and Blanca urged forward two steeds of Fez, fleeter than the wind. They came to the Fountain of the Pine and found the fight suspended.

"I am vanquished," said Don Carlos. "This knight has given me my life. Lautrec, you will perhaps be luckier than I."

"My wounds," said Lautrec, in a noble and gracious voice, "will excuse me from fighting this courteous knight. "I do not wish," he added, blushing, "to know the reason of your quarrel, or to probe a secret which will perhaps bring death to my heart. Soon my absence will renew peace among you, unless Blanca bids me stay at her feet."

"Knight," said Blanca, "you will stay with my brother, and you will regard me as your sister. All our hearts suffer grief—you will learn from us to bear the ills of life."

Blanca tried to persuade the three knights to give each other their hands. "I hate Aben Hamet," cried Don Carlos, "I envy him," said Lautrec. "As for me," said Aben Hamet, "I esteem Don Carlos, and I pity Lautrec, but I cannot love them."

"Let us remain together," said Blanca, "and sooner or later friendship will follow esteem. Let not the grave occasion which has brought us here be known in Granada."

From that moment Aben Hamet became a thousand times dearer to the daughter of the Duke of Santa Fé; love delights in valour. Nothing was wanting in him, since he was brave, and since Don Carlos owed his life to him.

Following Blanca's advice, Aben Hamet forbore to appear at the palace for some days in order to let the wrath of Don Carlos grow cooler. A mixture of feelings, both sweet and bitter, filled his soul. Upon the one hand the assurance of being loved so faithfully and warmly was for him a source of unbounded delight; on the other, the certainty he could never be happy without renouncing the faith of his fathers overcame the Moor's courage. Several years had passed already without bringing any cure to his ills. Was he to see the rest of his life pass away thus?

He was plunged in an abyss of the most serious and tender thoughts, when one evening he heard the bell ringing to the Christian prayer that heralds the close of day. The thought came to him to enter the temple of Blanca's God, and to ask counsel of the Ruler of the world.

He went out, and came to the door of an old mosque, turned by the faithful into a church. With a heart full of sad and solemn thoughts he made his way into the temple, once that of his God and his country. Service was over and the church deserted. A solemn darkness reigned among the multitudinous columns like trees of a grove planted in aisles. The light Arabian architecture, wedded with the Gothic, without losing anything of its elegance, had taken on a dignity more fitted to meditation. A few lamps faintly lit the depths of the vaulting; but a group of burning tapers still shone upon the altar of the sanctuary, and it glittered with gold and jewels. The Spaniards take a pride in despoiling themselves of their riches to decorate the objects of their worship, and the image of the living God, set among draperies of lace-work crowns of pearls, and wreaths of rubies, is adored by worshippers themselves in rags.

There was no seat in the vast enclosure. Upon a pavement of marble, covering the tombs of the dead, gentle and simple alike bowed down before the Lord. Aben Hamet advanced slowly up the deserted aisles that echoed to the sound of his footsteps. His soul was torn asunder between the memories

that this ancient building of the Moorish faith brought to mind and the feelings aroused in his heart by the religion of the Christians. At the foot of a column he dimly saw a motionless figure which at first he took for the effigy on a tomb. He came nearer and saw a young knight kneeling, his head reverently bent, and his hands crossed on his breast. The knight made no movement at the sound of Aben Hamet's footsteps; no interruption, no sign of outward life, disturbed his earnest prayer. His sword lay on the ground before him, and his feathered hat was on the marble by his side; he might have been fixed in that position by magic. It was Lautrec. "Ah," said Aben Hamet to himself, "this young and handsome Frenchman prays Heaven for some special favour; this warrior, already known for his courage, pours out his soul here before the King of heaven, like the humblest and most obscure of men. I also will pray to the God of knights and of glory."

Aben Hamet was about to throw himself on the ground, when he saw by the light of a lamp an Arabic inscription and a verse of the Koran half hidden beneath the crumbling plaster. Remorse came into his heart, and he hastened to leave the building in which he had been tempted to renounce the religion of his kindred.

The cemetery that surrounded the old mosque was a kind of garden, planted with oranges, cypresses and palms, and watered by two fountains; a cloister enclosed it. Aben Hamet, passing beneath an arch, saw a woman about to enter the church. Although she was wrapped in a veil, he knew the daughter of the Duke of Santa Fé; he stopped her and said, "Art thou come to seek Lautrec in this temple."

"Let be vulgar jealousies," answered Blanca. "If I loved you no more I would have told you so. I would scorn to deceive you. I came here to pray for you. You are now the only object of my thoughts. I forget my own soul for yours. You should either not have filled me with the poison

of your love, or else you should have consented to serve the God whom I serve. You trouble all my house; my brother hates you, my father is bowed down with grief because I will not choose a husband. Do you not see that my health is impaired? Look at this abode of death. It is enchanted. Soon I shall lay me down here unless you hasten to accept my faith before the Christian altar. Little by little the struggles I suffer undermine my strength. The passion that you inspire in me will not always support my frail being. Remember, O Moor, to speak your own language, the fire that brightens the torch is also the fire that consumes it."

Blanca passed into the church and left Aben Hamet overcome with her latest words.

This determined him; the Abencerrage was conquered. He would give up the errors of his faith; long enough had he struggled. The fear of seeing Blanca die overpowered all other feelings in his heart. "After all," he said to himself, "the God of the Christians is perhaps the true God. He must be the God of noble souls since he is the God of Blanca, of Don Carlos, and of Lautrec."

Thus thinking, Aben Hamet impatiently awaited the morrow, to make known to Blanca his determination to change a life of sadness and tears into one of joy and happiness. He could not go to the Duke of Santa Fé's palace until the evening, when he heard that Blanca had gone with her brother to the Generalife, where Lautrec was giving a feast. Aben Hamet, seized with new fears, hastened after her. Lautrec reddened at sight of the Moor; as for Don Carlos he received him with cold politeness, through which, however, his esteem was visible.

Lautrec regaled them with the richest fruits of Spain and Africa in one of the rooms of the Generalife, called the Hall of the Knights. All round the walls were hung the portraits of princes and knights who had conquered the Moors—Pelayo, the Cid, and Gonsalez de Cordova. The sword of the last king of Granada hung beneath them. Aben

Hamet concealed his bitterness, and only said, like the lion in the fable when he saw the picture of the man overcoming the beast, "We do not paint pictures."

The generous Lautrec, seeing the Abencerrage turn his eyes, in spite of himself, towards the sword of Boabdil, said to him, "Sir Moor, had I known that you would do me the honour of coming to this feast, I would not have received you here. Swords are often lost, and I have seen the bravest of kings hand over his own to a fortunate enemy."

"Ah," cried the Moor, covering his face with a fold of his robe, "one might lose it like Francis, but like Boabdil——"

Twilight fell; lights were brought, and the conversation ran in fresh channels. Don Carlos was asked to narrate the conquest of Mexico. He spoke of that unknown world with the high-flown eloquence natural to the Spanish people. He told of the misfortunes of Montezuma, the customs of the Americans, the wonders of Castilian bravery, and even the cruelties of his countrymen, in words that implied neither praise nor blame. These stories delighted Aben Hamet, whose passion for marvellous tales proclaimed his Arab blood. In his turn he pictured the Ottoman Empire, newly established upon the ruins of Constantinople, not without some regrets for the first empire of Mohammed, that happy time when the Commander of the Faithful was surrounded by his brilliant court—Zobeide, the Flower of Beauty, the Strength of Hearts, the Whirlwind, the generous Ganem, slave of love. As for Lautrec, he described the gay court of Francis, the new birth of art from barbarism, the honour, loyalty and chivalry of old joined to the polish of civilized times; Gothic turrets adorned with the Greek orders and Gaulish ladies enhancing the richness of their attire with the elegance of Athens.

After these tales, Lautrec, desiring to amuse the goddess of the feast, took a guitar and sang this ballad that he had composed to a mountain melody of his own country:

How sweet it is in dreams to see
The lovely place that nurtured me!
Sister, how bright was every day
With thee,
In France, my home, my love, my lay
For aye!

Can you forget our mother's look?
Our cottage and the ingle-nook,
Where both her children to her breast
She took
While we her silvery hair caressed
And kissed?

Ah, sister, can you mind no more
The castle by the flowing Dore,
The Moorish turret built, they tell,
Of yore,
Where at the break of day the bell
Would knell?

Can you forget the quiet mere,
The swallows dipping there and here,
The reeds that waved in breezes light
And clear
And sunset on the lake, a sight
So bright?

O bring my Helen back to me,
My mountains and the great oak tree!
My heart is grieving day by day
For thee,
Fair land of France, my love, my lay
For aye!

At the end of the last verse Lautrec wiped away with his glove a tear, wrung from him by the memory of the sweet land of France. The regrets of the handsome captive were keenly felt by Aben Hamet, who also mourned the loss of his country. When asked to take the guitar in his turn, he made excuse, saying that he knew but one ballad, and that would be distasteful to Christians.

"If it is of infidels who groan at our victories," said Don Carlos, scornfully, "sing on. Tears are permitted to the vanquished."

"Yes," said Blanca, "for that reason our fathers, bowed

under the yoke of the Moors, have left us so many laments."

So Aben Hamet sang this ballad, which he had learnt from a poet of the tribe of the Abencerrages.

Don Juan, they say,
Was riding one day,
And he spied from the plain
Granada of Spain;
And he cried and he swore
"Thou sweet little land,
My heart and hand
Are thine evermore!

"I'll make thee my bride,
And dower thee beside
With Cordova the rich,
And Seville the witch;
I'll give thee to wear
A robe of the silk
And pearls white as milk,
For the love that I bear!"

This answer she made:
"King of Leon," she said,
"I am wed to the Moor
And my wedlock is sure.
Keep the gifts in thy power;
A girdle of gold
And sons fair and bold
I have for my dower."

She spoke in her pride—
She spoke and she lied.
O shame to be borne
Of Granada forsworn!
And the damned Nazarene
Holds the fair heritage
Of the Abencerrage:
It was written, I ween!

The camel no more
From Arabia's shore
The Hadji shall bring
To the tomb by the spring;
For the damned Nazarene
Holds the fair heritage
Of the Abencerrage:
It was written, I ween!

Alhambra the sweet,
For Allah most meet,
O city of founts
And green-swarded mounts!
The damned Nazarene
Holds the fair heritage
Of the Abencerrage:
It was written, I ween!

The simplicity of the lament touched even the proud Don Carlos in spite of its curses against the Christians. He would fain have been excused in his turn from singing, but out of courtesy to Lautrec he yielded to his demands. Aben Hamet gave the guitar to Blanca's brother, who sang of the deeds of the Cid, his famous ancestor:

To Afric bound on pilgrimage afar,
The Cid, all armed, with dazzling valour fired,
At fair Ximena's feet to his guitar
Sang thus the song that honour had inspired:

Ximena bids me forth to fight the Moor:
Return, she cries, victorious in the fight!
Then shall I know Rodriguez' love is sure
When passion seeks its way by honour's light.

Ho, bring me, bring my helmet and my lance,
And tell the world Rodriguez' heart beats high;
In every fight, his glory to advance,
His lady-love and honour be his cry!

Boast, wanton Moor, thy gallantries in vain!
My noble song shall soar thy notes above,
Till it be called the Vanity of Spain,
For it shall sing of honour and of love.

In Andalusia's vale shall yet be heard
How aged Christians count my deeds of fame:
He, shall they say, o'er life itself preferred
His God, his king, his love, and honour's name.

Don Carlos looked so proud as he sang this ballad in a manly and resonant voice that he might have been taken for the Cid himself. Lautrec shared the warlike enthusiasm of his friend, but the Abencerrage had paled at the name of the Cid.

"That knight," he said, "whom Christians call the Flower

of Battles, among us bears the name of the Cruel. Had his generosity been equal to his valour——"

"His generosity," retorted Don Carlos, sharply interrupting Aben Hamet, "was even greater than his courage; only Moors could speak evil of the hero to whom my family owes its origin."

"What!" cried Aben Hamet, starting from the seat where he was reclining; "you count the Cid among your ancestors?"

"His blood runs in my veins," answered Don Carlos, "and I recognize that noble blood by the hatred which burns in my heart against the foes of my God!"

"So," said Aben Hamet, looking at Blanca, "you are of the house of Bivar, who, after the conquest of Granada, entered the homes of the unhappy Abencerrages and dealt death to an old knight of that name as he tried to defend the tomb of his father."

"Moor," cried Don Carlos, inflamed with rage, "I permit no one to dispute with me. If I still possess the spoil of the Abencerrages, my fathers won it at the price of their blood, and owe it only to their swords."

"Yet one word," said Aben Hamet, more and more excited. "In our exile we knew not that the Bivars bore the name of Santa Fé—it was this that caused my mistake."

"It was to that same Bivar, conqueror of the Abencerrages," replied Don Carlos, "that the title was given by Ferdinand the Catholic."

Aben Hamet's head sank upon his breast. He stood before Don Carlos, Lautrec, and Blanca. Floods of tears flowed from his eyes down to the dagger at his belt.

"Forgive me," he said; "I know that a man should not weep; henceforward tears of mine will run no more, though much remains for me to lament. Hear me! Blanca, my love for thee is like the burning winds of Arabia. I was conquered. I could not live without thee. Yesterday, the sight of this French knight at prayer and thy words in the

graveyard of the temple made me determine to know thy God and to offer thee my faith."

A start of joy from Blanca and of surprise from Don Carlos interrupted Aben Hamet. Lautrec hid his face in both hands. The Moor guessed his thought, and, shaking his head with a heartbreaking smile, "Knight," said he, "lose not all hope, and thou, Blanca, mourn for ever the last of the Abencerrages."

Blanca, Don Carlos, and Lautrec all lifted their hands to heaven.

"The last Abencerrage," they exclaimed.

There was silence; fear, hope, hate, love, astonishment and jealousy moved all hearts. Then Blanca fell on her knees. "God of goodness," she said, "Thou hast justified my choice; I could love none but the descendant of heroes."

"Sister," cried Don Carlos, in anger, "remember that Lautrec is here!"

"Don Carlos," said Aben Hamet, "calm your wrath. It is for me to give you peace." Then addressing Blanca, who had seated herself, he said:

"Houri of heaven, spirit of love and beauty, Aben Hamet will be thy slave until he breathes his last. But hear the full story of his misery. The old man thy ancestor slew fighting for his home was the father of my father. Hear also a secret which I have hidden, or, rather, which thou hast made me forget. When I first came to revisit my sad country, I was bent upon finding some son of the Bivars who could give me satisfaction for the blood his fathers had shed."

"And now," said Blanca, in a voice full of pain, but through which the note of a noble soul was heard, "what is your resolve?"

"The only resolve worthy of thee," answered Aben Hamet. "To give thee back thy vows; to pay by my eternal absence and my death the debt we owe to the enmity of our Gods, our countries and our houses. If ever my image should fade from thy heart, if time, which destroys all,

should take away from thy memory the thought of the Abencerrage . . . this French knight. . . . That sacrifice is owed to thy brother."

Lautrec rose hastily and threw himself into the arms of the Moor. "Aben Hamet," he cried, "think not you can outdo me in generosity. I am French; Bayard made me a knight; I have shed my blood for my king; I will be like my sponsor and my prince, without fear and without reproach. If you remain among us, I beg Don Carlos to give you his sister's hand. If you leave Granada, never a word of my love shall trouble her who loves you. You shall not carry away with you the terrible thought that Lautrec, careless of your virtue, seeks his own good from your misfortune."

And the young knight pressed the Moor to his breast with the impulsive warmth of a Frenchman.

"Knights," said Don Carlos in his turn, "I expected no less from the noble races that bred you. Aben Hamet, by what sign can I be sure that you are the last Abencerrage?"

"By my bearing," answered Aben Hamet.

"I admire it," said the Spaniard. "But before I say more, give me some proof of your birth."

The Moor drew from his bosom a ring, the heirloom of the Abencerrages, which he wore upon a golden chain.

At that sign Don Carlos gave his hand to the unhappy Aben Hamet. "Sir Knight," he said, "I know you for a nobleman, and true son of kings. You honour me by your enmity to my house, and I accept the battle that you came in disguise to seek. If I fall, all my goods, once yours, shall be faithfully restored to you. If you forsake your purpose to fight, take what I offer you—become a Christian, and accept my sister's hand, which Lautrec has claimed on your behalf."

The temptation was great, but it was not beyond the strength of Aben Hamet. If love spoke with all its power to his heart, on the other hand he could not think without horror of uniting the blood of the oppressed with that of the oppressors. He seemed to see the shade of his ancestor arise

from the tomb to reproach him for that unholy alliance. Stricken with sorrow, he cried, "Ah, must I meet here so many lofty souls, so many noble characters, the more bitterly to feel my loss! Let Blanca speak; let her say what I must do to be worthy of her love."

"Return to the desert!" she cried, and swooned away.

Aben Hamet bowed low in adoration of Blanca, deeper adoration than any he offered to Heaven.

That same might he left for Malaga, and embarked on a ship that was to touch at Oran. Near that town he found the camp of a caravan that leaves Morocco every three years, crosses Africa to Egypt, and at Yemen meets the caravan for Mecca. Aben Hamet joined the pilgrims.

Blanca, whose life at first was in danger, recovered. Lautrec, faithful to the promise he had given the Moor, departed, and never a word of love or pain troubled the sad heart of the Duke of Santa Fé's daughter. Every year Blanca would wander on the mountains of Malaga at the time when her lover had been wont to come back from Africa; she would sit on the rocks, watching the sea and the distant ships, and then return to Granada. The rest of her time was passed among the ruins of the Alhambra. She did not complain, she did not weep, she never spoke of Aben Hamet; a stranger would have thought her happy. She remained the last of her house. Her father died of grief, and Don Carlos was killed in a duel in which Lautrec was his second. None ever knew the fate of Aben Hamet.

Going out of Tunis by the gates that leads to the ruins of Carthage you find a graveyard. Beneath a palm, in a corner of it, I was shown a tomb, called the tomb of the last Abencerrage. There is nothing worthy of note about it; the grave-cover is made from a single stone; only, by a Moorish custom, in the middle of the stone a shallow basin has been chiselled out. Rain-water gathers in the hollow of this funeral cup, and, under that burning sun, quenches the thirst of the fowls of the air.

JEAN EMMANUEL CHARLES NODIER

(1780–1844)

(I)

BEAN FLOWER AND PEA BLOSSOM

THERE was, once upon a time, a poor man and his poor wife, who were very old indeed, and had no children; now, this they were sorry for, because they felt that in a few years' time they should no longer be able to cultivate their beans, and carry them to market to sell. So one day when they were at work weeding their bean-field (it was all the property they had, besides a little cottage, and I wish I could say I had as much); one day, then, when they were digging up the weeds, which grew apace, the old woman espied in a snug little corner beneath the thickest tufts a neat little bundle, very nicely packed, and which enclosed a very fine boy, who appeared by his looks to be eight or ten months old, but who was as wise as other little boys are at two years old, for he was weaned already. So wise then was he that he did not refuse to eat boiled beans, which he would raise to his mouth in a very genteel manner.

When the old man heard his poor wife exclaim, he came running up from the other end of his field; and when he also had considered, in his turn, the beautiful child which God had sent them, the good old couple embraced each other, and wept with joy; after which they hastened to return to the cottage, lest the evening dew, which had begun to fall, might hurt their foundling.

Now as soon as they had ensconced themselves snugly by the hearth—only think how great their surprise must have been!—for the little child held out his arms, and smiled

most lovingly upon them, calling them *mama* and *papa*, as if he had never known any other parents.

Then the old man perched him upon his knee, and cantered him up and down like the young ladies we see on horseback, saying all the while some pretty things to amuse him; and which the child responded to in his own merry way, that he might take his part with the old man in so agreeable a conversation. All this while the old woman was making a fine clear fire with dry bean-stalks, which lighted up the whole room; and this she did to comfort the little limbs of their new visitor by its genial warmth, and to make him some nice bean pap with a spoonful of honey melted in it, which gave it a delicious taste.

By and by she put him to bed in his swaddling clothes made of fine linen, and which were very white and clean, choosing for his bed the nicest bean-stalks she could find at home, for these poor people did not know what it was to lie upon fine down or feather beds.

The child slept very snugly on his bed of stalks; and when he had gone to sleep, the old man said to the old woman, "There is one thing which puzzles me, and that is, what name we ought to bestow upon this beautiful boy, for we don't know who are his parents, or where he comes from." Now the old woman, who had a quick fancy though she was but a poor village crone, answered immediately, "Let us call him BEAN FLOWER! because it was in our bean-field that we found him, and because he is to be the delight and consolation of our declining years." The old man agreed that there could not be a fitter name.

I think it useless to tell you how he passed every day and every year, for that would make my story too long. Suffice it to say that the old people grew older every day, whilst little Bean Flower grew stronger and finer at the same time. Not that he became very tall, for he was only two feet and a half high at twelve; and whenever he worked in his bean-field, which he was very fond of, you could hardly have

perceived him from the high-road: but he was so well shaped though small, his face and his manner were so becoming, he was so mild, and yet so firm in his language, he looked so bold in his sky-blue frock and red belt and his fine Sunday cap with a bean flower for a feather to it, that nobody could help admiring him, and many people thought he really must be the child of some fairy.

I must admit that there were many things which favoured the supposition of these simple people. In the first place, the cottage and its bean-field, on which a single cow would not have found wherewithal to graze a few years before, had become one of the richest domains in the country without anybody knowing how. Nothing, to be sure, can be more common than to see bean-plants growing, blossoming, and ripening in their pod; but to behold a bean-field itself grow wider, without having been extended by purchase, or by unjust encroachment on other people's ground, that indeed is a matter beyond the understanding even of the wisest.

For all that this lucky bean-field kept growing and growing; it grew towards the north, it grew towards the south, it grew towards the east, it grew towards the west; and all in vain was it that the neighbours measured their grounds, for the measure was always right with an odd patch or two over, so that they began, very reasonably, to think that the whole country was increasing in size. On the other hand, the beans grew so thick that the cottage never could have held the crop, had it not widened considerably; and, as one year the bean-fields had everywhere failed for a distance of five miles off, the value of our good people's crop was greatly increased, on account of the vast consumption of beans which took place at the tables of lords and kings.

In the midst of this plenty, Bean Flower did all the work himself; he turned the earth over, he picked out the seed, he smoothed the beds, he pulled up the weeds, he dug the ground, he raked, he reaped, he shelled; and besides all

this, he kept the hedges and fences in good order, and then employed the rest of his time in receiving and dealing with the market people, for he could read, write, and cipher, though he had never been to school; he was indeed a blessing to these poor people.

Now it happened, one night when Bean Flower was asleep, the old man said to his wife, "Little Bean Flower has been very serviceable to us, since he has enabled us to pass away quietly, and without any toil, the few years we have still to live. Though we have bequeathed him in our will the whole of this property, we have only restored him his own rights; and we shall prove ungrateful to the child unless we manage to get him a more suitable lot in life than that of a bean-seller. Pity it is that he should be too modest to take his degree as doctor in a university, and a little bit too short to become a general."

"It is a pity," said the old woman, "that he has not studied enough to know the names of five or six diseases in Latin, for then there would be nothing so easy as to have him dubbed a doctor."

"As for your law-suits," continued the old man, "I am afraid he has too much sense and judgment ever to make out one of them."

"I have always fancied," returned the old woman, "that he would marry Princess Pea Blossom when he came of age."

"Pea Blossom," said the old man, shaking his head, "is far too great a princess to marry a poor foundling who will have nothing to call his own but a little cottage and a bean-field. Pea Blossom, my old girl, is a match for an alderman, a lord mayor, or even the king himself, if he should become a widower. We are talking of serious matters, and you are unreasonable."

"Bean Flower has more sense than we two," answered the old woman, after a little bit of reflection. "Besides, this business is not ours, but his, and it would be ungracious to

carry it further without consulting him." And thereupon the good old couple shut their eyes and fell asleep.

The day began to peep, when Master Bean Flower jumped out of bed, like a diligent boy, to run to the fields according to his custom. But, guess his astonishment, when he found his Sunday clothes on the box, where he had laid his old ones the night before.

"And yet it is a working day, if there be one, or else the calendar deceives me," said he, aside, "and my mother must intend to keep holiday without my knowing the reason, since she has got ready my fine frock and ornamental cap. But let it be as she wishes, for I should be sorry to cross her mood in anything at her great age, and a few hours' loss may easily be borrowed from the week, by getting up earlier and going to bed later."

And then Master Bean Flower decked himself as smartly as he could; but first he knelt down and prayed to God for the health of his good old father and mother and the success of his crop.

As he was preparing to go out and look upon the field before the old couple awoke, he met the old woman on the threshold, bearing in her hand a hot smoking porridge, which she placed on his little table along with a wooden spoon.

"Eat, eat," said she to him; "and don't go out without first taking this nice sweetened porridge mixed with green aniseed, as you used to like it when a child; for you have a great, a very great way to go to-day, my darling."

"This is very kind of you," said Master Bean Flower, looking at her with surprise; "but whither do you send me?"

The old woman sat down upon a stool that was by the table, and rested her two hands upon her knee: "You are going into the world," answered she, smiling, "into the world, my pretty flower; you have never seen any but us, and two or three other poor hucksters to whom you sell your beans

to provide for the house expenses, like a worthy lad as you are; and as you are destined some day to be a great man, if the price of beans should not decline, it is but proper, my darling, that you should try to form some respectable connections. Now I must tell you, then, that there is a large town, about five miles off, in which at every step you go you will meet with great lords in gold habits, and fine ladies in silver robes, with bunches of roses all about them. Your pretty looks, so affable and lively, cannot fail to strike them with admiration; and I am much mistaken if the day closes before you have obtained some honourable appointment, in which you may gain a great deal of money without doing any work, either at court or in some public office. So eat, eat, my darling, and don't go without partaking of this nice sugared porridge mixed with green aniseed. Now, as you know the value of beans better than you do that of money," continued the old woman, "you must sell these six quart measures of pickled beans at the market. I don't give you more for fear of burdening you, besides which, beans are so dear at the present time that you could not bring home the price of them, even though it was all paid to you in gold. And, therefore, we have agreed, your father and I, that you should keep half the sum to spend in proper diversions suited to your age, or in the purchase of well-wrought jewels, to put on every Sunday, such as silver watches adorned with rubies or emeralds, an ivory cup and ball, and a humming-top. The remainder of the money you can carry to the Savings Bank. Go then, my little flower, now that you have finished your porridge, and take care you are not benighted whilst running after the butterflies, for we should die with grief if you did not return before night. And mind you keep in the beaten track for fear of the wolves."

"You shall be obeyed, good mother," said Master Bean Flower, kissing the old woman, "although I should feel more pleasure if I spent the day in the field; as for the wolves, with my hoe I don't fear them."

So saying, he hung his hoe boldly to his belt, and set out at a steady pace.

"Return home early," cried the old woman after him, already beginning to regret she had let him depart.

Bean Flower walked on and on, taking terrible strides like a man five feet high, and looking about him here and there at the new and strange things which he met on his way, for he had never conceived that the earth was so large and wonderful. However, when he had walked on for an hour, as he reckoned by the sun's height, and wondered he had not reached the town after walking so fast, he thought he heard some one crying after him, "Bo, bo, bo, bo, bo, bo, tee! stop, Master Bean Flower, if you please."

"Who calls me?" said Master Bean Flower, clapping his hand firmly to his hoe.

"Pray stop here, Master Bean Flower! Bo, bo, bo, bo, bo, bo, tee! 'tis I who speak to you."

"Is it true," said Bean Flower, directing his attention to the top of an old hollow pine tree, half decayed, upon which a large owl was swinging with the breeze; "and what business have you and I together, my fine bird?"

"It would be strange if you remembered me," replied the owl; "for I have never served you except in secret, as becomes a delicate owl, and one who is modest and orderly, by eating, bit by bit, at my own hazard, the nasty rats who nibbled every year one half of your crop; and that is why your field now produces you enough to buy you a pretty little kingdom, if you can rest satisfied with it. As for me, the unfortunate and disinterested victim of devotion, I have not one poor rat left in the larder for my holidays; for my eyes have become so worn in your service that I can hardly find my way, even at night. I called to you, therefore, bounteous Bean Flower, to beg you to grant me one of those nice quart measures of beans which you carry on the top of your stick, and which will enable me to eke out my

miserable life until my eldest son comes of age, whose honour you may trust to.

"What you ask for, Mr. Owl," cried Bean-Flower, taking one of the three measures of beans off the stick which belonged to himself, "is the just debt of gratitude; and I am happy to pay it." The owl flew down upon it, snatched it up with beak and claws, and sped back to his tree with one flap of his wing.

"Oh! what a hurry you are in!" resumed Bean Flower. "May I inquire, Mr. Owl, whether I am far from the city my mother has sent me to?"

"You are just entering upon it, my friend," said the owl; and having said this, he flew away, and perched upon another tree.

Master Bean Flower went on his way again, with one measure the less for his burden, and almost sure that he was about to reach the great city; but he had not gone more than a hundred yards when he heard his name again.

"Ba-a, ba-a, ba-a; bakkee! Stop here, Master Bean Flower, if you please."

"I think I know that voice," said Bean Flower, turning about. "Yes, truly, it is that impudent rogue of a mountain doe, which used always to roam with her little ones about my field to filch a good mouthful. So there you are, Mrs. Marauder?"

"Why do you speak of me as a marauder, Pretty Flower? Ah, your hedges were too well cut, your ditches too deep, and your fences too close for that. All that one could do was to clip off the end of a few leaves which stuck out between the joints of the hurdle; and when we prune, it is good for the plants, for what says the proverb:

> "The sheep's tooth does mischief,
> The doe's tooth brings plenty."

"That is enough," said Bean Flower; "but tell me, why did you stop me, and what can I do for you, Mrs. Doe?"

"Alas!" answered she, shedding big tears; "ba-a, ba-a, bakkee. I wanted to tell you how a naughty wolf had eaten up my husband, the buck, and that we are in great distress, my orphan and me, since we have lost our protector; so that she is in danger of starving unless you come to her relief, poor little kid! So I called you, noble Bean Flower, to beg you would take pity on us, and to give us one of those nice measures of beans which you are carrying at the end of your stick, and which will be a sufficient supply until we receive succour from our relatives."

"What you ask of me, Mrs. Doe," cried Bean Flower, taking another of his own measures of beans off the stick, "is a deed of pity and benevolence which I am bound to perform."

The doe snapped up the measure with her lips and with one bound vanished into the thicket.

"Oh! how you hurry away," exclaimed Bean Flower; "may I inquire of you, my neighbour, whether I am still far from the city which my mother has sent me to?"

"You are in it already," cried the doe, plunging in among the brambles.

Then Bean Flower went on his way once more, relieved of two of his measures, and looking about for the walls of the town, when he perceived, by a slight noise which came from the skirts of the wood, that he was closely pursued. He advanced quickly to the spot with his hoe in his hand, and it was well he did so, for the party who followed him so slyly and stealthily was neither more nor less than an old wolf, whose countenance was not very prepossessing, I assure you.

"So it was you, malignant beast," said Bean Flower, "who destined me the honour of figuring at your supper table! Luckily my weapon has two prongs as sharp as all your teeth put together, without prejudice to them; and take my word for it, good fellow, you shall sup to-night without me; and don't be too sure that I shall not revenge upon your ugly person the killing of the doe's husband, who

was the father of the kid, and whose family your cruelty has reduced to the lowest brink of wretchedness. I ought perhaps to do so, and it would only be an act of justice, had I not been brought up to shudder at the sight of blood, so as even to spare a treacherous wolf."

The wolf, who so far had listened very humbly, suddenly heaved a long and plaintive cry, and raised his eyes as if to call heaven to witness.

" Oh, divine powers! who gave me the form and honours of the wolf," said he, with many sobs, " you know my heart never admitted evil thoughts. You are still at liberty, my lord," he continued, inclining his head respectfully towards Bean Flower, " to take my wretched life, which I deliver to your clemency without either fear or remorse. I shall die without repining at your sentence, if you think fit to sacrifice me, by way of expiation, to the manifest crimes of my brethren of the wolfish tribe; for I have ever most tenderly loved you, and greatly honoured you, since the day when I used to hang over your cradle with true delight, and fondle you, whilst your respected mother was away. You were even then so comely and so stately that it was easy to tell, by your very looks, that you were fated to become the noble and powerful prince that you are. All I ask of you, before you pass sentence upon me, is to believe that I am guiltless of steeping my paws in the blood of the unfortunate husband of the doe. Brought up and educated according to the strictest principles of temperance and self-denial, from which I have never swerved throughout my whole career as a wolf, I was absent at that time, diffusing the sound doctrines of morality among the lupine tribes, which belong to my community; hoping to bring them gradually, by precept and example, to the practice of frugality, which is the grand object of wolfish perfection. That is not all, my lord: the husband of the doe was my friend; he was endeared to me by many good qualities and kindly feelings, and we often travelled together

and conversed, on account of his native wit and good taste. A melancholy contest for precedence (you know how punctilious the bucks have ever been on this point) was the occasion of his death whilst I was abroad; and I shall never cease to bewail his loss." And thereupon the wolf began to weep, and the tears seemed to issue from his very heart, as if the doe herself had shed them.

"For all that you were following me," said Bean Flower, still keeping his two-pronged weapon wide open.

"Twice, my lord," answered the wolf, with a soothing voice, "I did follow you, because I hoped to engage your interest in my benevolent and charitable purposes, but in some place better suited to conversation than this is. Alas! said I to myself, if my Lord Bean Flower, whose reputation is so high and so widely spread, would only contribute his share to my plan of reform, he would have a fine opportunity to-day; I will answer for it that the expense shall not exceed one of those nice measures of beans which he carries on the top of his stick, to provide with dainties a whole ordinary of wolves, she-wolves, and their cubs, used to a vegetable diet, and to preserve a countless generation of bucks, does and kids."

"It is the last of my own measures," thought Bean Flower; "but what need have I of watches, cups and balls, and tops? and what comparison is there between a childish amusement and a good action? There is your measure of beans," said he, taking off his stick the last of the measures which his mother had given him for his pocket-money. "It is the last of my fortune," he added; "but I do not regret it, and I shall be grateful, friend wolf, if you make so good a use of it as you promised."

The wolf stuck his teeth into it, and carried it off like a shot to his den.

"Oh! how you hurry away," exclaimed Bean Flower; "may I inquire of you, Mr. Wolf, if I am still far from the world my mother has sent me to?"

"You have been in it some time," replied the wolf, laughing aside; "and if you stop in it for a thousand years, you will see nothing else in it but what you have seen already." Bean Flower went on his way again, relieved of his three measures, and looking about for the walls of the town, which never appeared. He began to feel tired and weary, when his attention was roused by cries of distress proceeding from a small by-path. He ran towards the spot. "What's the matter?" said he, raising his weapon; "who calls for help? Speak, for I see nothing."

"It is I, good Bean Flower; I, Pea Blossom," answered a low, soft voice, "who beg you to deliver me from my present embarrassment; if you only have the will, it will not give you much trouble."

"Let me assure you, madam, I am not accustomed to mind what it costs me to oblige a person. You may dispose of all my fortune and patrimony," continued he, "save and except the three measures of beans which I carry on the top of my stick; because they do not belong to me, but to my father and mother, and because I have just now given those which were mine to a venerable owl, a very godly wolf, who preaches like a hermit, and to the most interesting of mountain does. I have not got a single bean left to offer you."

"You are jesting," replied Pea Blossom, somewhat piqued. "Who talks of beans, my lord? I don't want your beans, forsooth; and in my buttery we don't know such a thing. The service I ask of you is to put your finger on the handle of my carriage, and throw back the top, beneath which I am almost smothered."

"I should be happy to oblige you, madam," cried Bean Flower, "if I could see your carriage; but there is no sign of any carriage in this path, which does not look like a place fit for carriages to drive in. However, I shall not be long before I find it, for I can hear that you are very close to me."

"What!" said she, laughing aloud, "can't you see my carriage; you well-nigh crushed it, like a careless fellow!

There it is, right before you, kind Mr. Bean Flower; and it is easy to distinguish it by its elegant appearance, which slightly resembles a small pea."

"It resembles a small pea so closely," thought Bean Flower, stooping, "that I would have laid my life it was nothing else but a small pea."

A single glance was enough to show Bean Flower that it was a very large pea, as round as an orange, and as yellow as a lemon, supported by four golden wheels, and furnished with a small portmanteau made of a small peas-cod, as green and bright as morocco leather. He hastened to touch the handle, and the door flew open.

Pea Blossom emerged, and alighted gaily on her feet. Bean Flower arose in astonishment, for he had never conceived anything so lovely as Pea Blossom; she had, indeed, the most perfect face that a painter could invent: her eyes as long and oval as almonds, as blue as violets, as piercing as daggers; and a fine laughing mouth, which, when it half opened, allowed you to see a set of teeth as white as alabaster, and of the brightest enamel. Her short robe, which was slightly puffed out, and streaked with rosy flakes like the blossom on the sweet peas, hardly reached lower than her knees. Her legs were formed in perfection, and encased in smart silk stockings as tightly drawn as if a capstan had been used, and below which were two small feet, so delicately shaped that anyone might wish to be the maker of her shoes, only to have the privilege of trying them on.

"What are you staring at?" said Pea Blossom; an evident proof that Bean Flower did not look very sprightly at that moment. Bean Flower blushed, but soon recovered himself.

"I was wondering how it could be," he replied modestly, "that a princess so beautiful, who is about my own size, could be shut up in that pea."

"You underrate my carriage out of reason, Bean Flower,"

returned Pea Blossom; "it is very comfortable to travel in when open; and it is only by chance that I have not got with me my chief equerry, my almoner, my steward, my secretary, and two or three of my ladies-in-waiting. I am fond of driving out alone; and this whim was the cause of the accident which happened to me. I don't know whether you have ever been in company with the King of the Crickets, whom you may easily know by his shining black mask, like Harlequin's, with stiff straight horns, and by his harsh-toned voice. The King of the Crickets did me the honour to love me; he knew that my minority would terminate this day, and that it is the custom for the princesses of our house to choose a husband when they are ten years old. So he threw himself in my way, according to etiquette, to pester me with the horrid din of his jangling declarations; and I answered him, as I always do, by stopping my ears."

"O joyful news!" said Bean Flower, delighted; "you will not marry the King of the Crickets?"

"I will not marry him," answered Pea Blossom with dignity. "My choice was already made. But I had no sooner signified to him my refusal, than the odious Cricket sprang upon my carriage, as if he would swallow it, and threw down the top. 'Now go and get married,' said he to me, 'you conceited little minx! Get married if you can, and see whether any husband will come to you in this state. As for me, I care no more for you and your kingdom than I do for a pea!'"

"Do but tell me in what hole the King of the Crickets has hid himself!" exclaimed Bean Flower, in a rage. "I will soon dig him up with my weeding-fork, and will bring him to you, princess, bound hands and feet, to await your decree. I can feel, however, for his despair," added he, dropping his head sorrowfully. "But don't you think I ought to accompany you to your capital to protect you from his pursuit?"

" That would indeed be necessary, generous Bean Flower, were I far from the frontier of my kingdom. But, lo, there is a field of sweet peas, all of them faithful subjects to me, and which no enemy dare approach." So speaking, she struck the earth with her foot, and hung suspended by her two arms to two bending stalks which bowed beneath her, and then rose up, sprinkling their sweet leaves over her hair. Whilst Bean Flower stood looking at her with pleasure, as I should have done had I been in his place, she transfixed him with piercing glances from her eyes, and spellbound him with her smile to such a degree that he could have died from the joy of beholding her, and would have perhaps stood there till now if she had let him.

" I have detained you too long," said she to him, " for I know that the bean-trade is very busy in these times; but my carriage, or rather your own, will soon enable you to recover your lost time. Do not offend me, I entreat you, by refusing so trifling a present. I have millions of such carriages in the granaries of my palace; and when I wish for a new one, I pick it from out a handful, and fling the rest to the mice."

" The smallest favour from your highness would be the pride and glory of my life," replied Bean Flower; " but you do not perceive I am yet laden with these beans."

" Try it," said Pea Blossom, laughing, and joyfully swinging to and fro upon the cluster of sweet peas; " try it, and do not wonder at everything like a child who has seen nothing at all." In truth, Bean Flower had no difficulty in stowing his three measures in the boot of the carriage, which might have held thirty of them and upwards. At this he was rather mortified.

" I am ready to go, madam," rejoined he, seating himself upon a well-stuffed cushion, the fullness of which allowed him to place himself at ease, in any posture, even to stretch himself out at full length upon it, if he liked. " It is my duty to my kind parents not to leave them in suspense the

first time I am absent from them; and I now only wait for your coachman, who, I suppose, fled in terror at the gross insult of the King of the Crickets, carrying off the horses and the shafts along with him. I shall then leave this happy spot, with the everlasting regret of having seen you once without hoping to see you again."

"Good!" replied Pea Blossom, without noticing the latter part of Bean Flower's speech, which was so very pointed; "good! my carriage has neither coachman, nor shafts, nor horses: it is propelled by steam, and it goes fifty thousand leagues an hour. Now, let me ask you whether you still fear getting back in your own good time. You have nothing to do but to remember the word and action I shall use to set it a-going. In the portmanteau you will find various articles which may be useful on your journey; and they are all yours, without reserve. If you open it as you would a shell of green peas, you will find it contains three jewel boxes, of the same shape and size as a pea, each suspended to a fine thread, which sustains them in their case like three peas in a pod, so that they are in no danger of knocking against each other and being damaged during a journey. It is a fine piece of workmanship; they will yield to the pressure of your finger, like the spring of my carriage, and you will only have to sow the contents in a hole in the ground, made with the point of your weeding hook, and immediately whatever you wish to have shall shoot up, sprout, and come forth. Is not that a miracle, eh? Only remember, that when the third shall be used, I have nothing left to offer you; for I have only three green peas, as you had but three measures of beans; and the best girl in the world can only bestow what belongs to her. Are you ready to begin your journey?"

Bean Flower having made a sign of assent, for he had lost all power of speech, Pea Blossom clapped her right-hand thumb against her middle finger, crying out at the same time, "Go then, little pea!" And the little pea was upwards of

fifteen hundred yards from the scented field of Pea Blossom before Bean Flower thought he had left her, and he looked for her in vain. "Alas!" cried he.

Indeed it would be no praise to the rapid progress of the little pea to say it advanced with the speed of a musket-ball. Woods, towns, hills, and seas vanished far more rapidly on its course than the Chinese shadows of Seraphim before the wand of the famous magician Sotomago.

The most remote horizon had hardly become visible before it sprang to meet the little pea, and was in a moment after out of sight behind Bean Flower. When he turned his head, it was gone. Finally, he had several times outstripped the sun; several times come back to it, and passed it again, with constant changes of night and day, when Master Bean Flower began to suspect that he had left behind him the town he was going to, and the market to which he was carrying his beans.

"The springs of this carriage are rather brisk," he suddenly thought within himself; for my little readers have not forgotten that he was endowed with a very keen understanding. "It started off at random, before Miss Pea Blossom had done telling me where I was to go; and I see no reason for it stopping throughout the course of ages upon ages; for that lovely princess, who is as giddy as she is young, told me indeed how to set the vehicle in motion, but not how to stop it." And Bean Flower had tried to no purpose every epithet he had ever heard uttered by the carriers and mule drivers. The plague of a carriage went on faster and faster; and while he raked up his memory to change and diversify his exclamations, the carriage sped through every latitude, and in little time rode over ten kingdoms.

"Plague take thee, thou vixen of a carriage!" exclaimed Bean Flower, and the carriage rattled onwards from the tropics to the poles, from the poles to the tropics, and through every circle in the sphere, without any regard to the noxious

changes of temperature. It was enough to roast him or to freeze him had it lasted; but Bean Flower, as we have often repeated, was blessed with an admirable intelligence. "Nay," said he to himself, "since Pea Blossom has hurled her carriage through the world by merely saying, 'Go then, little pea!' perhaps one may stop it by saying the contrary." This reasoning was very logical.

"Stop then, little pea!" cried Bean Flower, clapping his right-hand thumb against his middle finger, as he had observed Pea Blossom to do.

I doubt whether a learned academy would have argued more cleverly. The little pea stopped so suddenly that you could not have stopped it better if you had nailed it to the ground. It did not stir. Bean Flower alighted from his carriage, picked it up carefully, and let it slip into a leathern pouch, which he carried in his belt to put in the samples of his beans. But first he took off the portmanteau. The spot at which Bean Flower's carriage had thus fixed itself at his command has not been described by travellers. Bruce marks it at the sources of the Nile, Monsieur Douville at Congo, and Monsieur Caille at Timbuctoo. It was an interminable plain, so dry, so rocky, and so wild that there was not a single bush to lie under, no moss of the desert to lay one's head upon, not a berry to satisfy hunger, or a drop of water to slake one's thirst; still Bean Flower was not alarmed. He ripped up his portmanteau very neatly with his nail, and took out one of the three small jewel boxes which Pea Blossom had described to him. Then he opened it as he had opened the carriage, and sowed its contents in the ground with the point of his weeding hook. "Let what will happen of this," said he, "I sadly want a tent to cover me to-night, were it only made of a pea plant in blossom; a slight repast to nourish me, were it only a pea soup; and a bed to lie upon, were it only the feathers of a humming bird: for I cannot return to my parents to-day, I am too much pressed by hunger and overcome with weariness."

The words had scarcely passed through his lips before he saw arise out of the sands a superb tent or pavilion, having the shape of the pea plant, which arose, and grew up, and expanded around, and leaned here and there on ten golden props, scattering about in all directions a graceful tapestry of foliage, enamelled with pea blossoms, and rounded into numerous arcades, from each of which hung suspended from the centre of the arch a rich crystal lustre filled with scented wax lights. The back of every arcade was adorned with a Venetian mirror of enormous size, which reflected such a stream of light as would have dazzled the eye of an eagle accustomed even to the noon-day sun.

Beneath the feet of Bean Flower, a pea leaf had fallen accidentally from the roof; it extended into a magnificent carpet, decorated with all the colours of the rainbow. Moreover, this carpet was covered with tables of ebony and sandal-wood, which groaned beneath the weight of pastry and confectionery, or that of iced fruits flavoured with choice cordials; whilst in a large gilt china cup was the very pea soup Bean Flower had wished for.

Amidst this display he could also distinguish his bed, that is to say, the humming bird's feather which he had so much desired, and which was twinkling in a corner, like a carbuncle fallen from the crown of the Great Mogul; and yet it was so tiny a little bed, you might have hid it beneath a grain of corn. Bean Flower thought at first that this couch did not match very well with the other conveniences in the tent; but, as he continued to look at the humming bird's feather, it began to increase in size so fast that it soon became many humming birds' feathers one hand in depth; it seemed to be a couch of sparkling gems, which would have bent under the pressure of a butterfly had it alighted upon them.

"Enough, enough," said Bean Flower, "enough of your humming-birds' feathers; I shall sleep too well as it is."

That our young traveller did honour to his banquet, and that he lost no time in seeking repose, my young readers will

not require me to tell them. Love did run a little in his head; but at twelve years old love seldom prevents sleep, and Pea Blossom, whom he had scarcely seen, had only left in his mind the image of a delightful vision, which nought but sleep could restore to his fancy. That was another reason why he should sleep. Be that as it may, Bean Flower was too prudent to give way to this vain and idle joy before he had examined the outside of his pavilion, the pomp and magnificence of which were more than enough to draw to it all the thieves round about; and such people abound in every country under the sun. So he went out of the magic circle with his weeding hook in his hand, and marched round his tent, to make sure of the good state of his encampment.

As soon as he had reached the furthest frontier (this was a small ravine formed by the running waters, and over which a kid might have skipped), Bean Flower stood still, chilled with that shudder which is peculiar to men of spirit; for even the truest courage has its share in that terror which is common to our frail humanity, and only summons its strength after reflection. And, upon my word, there was a sight for any man to reflect upon.

It was a line of battle, in which amid the darkness of a starlight night, there were glistening at him two hundred fixed and flaming eyes, whilst in their front were perpetually running from right to left, and then from left to right, two eyes so sharp and oblique, that they showed by their expression they belonged to a very active general.

Bean Flower knew nothing of Lavater, Gall, or Spurzheim; he did not belong to the Phrenological Society; but he had the plain natural instinct which teaches all created beings to distinguish the countenance of an enemy; and almost at the first glance he bestowed upon the commander-in-chief of that hungry herd of wolves, he recognized in him the cowardly coaxing wolf who had so craftily swindled him, by pretending to be a philosopher and moralist, out of his last measure of beans.

"Mr. Wolf," said Bean Flower, "has lost no time in collecting his troop, and pursuing me with it; but by what contrivance have they been able to overtake me, so many too as they are, unless the good-for-nothing wolves have likewise travelled in a pea? It is very probable," he continued with a sigh, "that the mysteries of science are not unknown to the wicked; and now I think of it, I would not swear but they have invented these mysteries in order to initiate the good people in their own detestable schemes and designs."

Bean Flower was slow and steady in his enterprises, but prompt and sudden in his resolves. He therefore snatched the portmanteau out of his pouch, took out the second pea, opened it as he had opened the first pea, and sowed its contents in the earth with the point of his weeding fork. "Come what come may," said he, "but I sadly want this night a good strong wall, even were it no thicker than that of our cottage at home; and a very close rail, were it no stronger than that of my fences, to protect me against the wolves."

Then sure enough walls began to rise up: not cottage walls, but palace walls: and rails sprang up before every portico; not rails in the shape of fences, but high and lordly rails of blue steel, with gilt shafts and points, through which neither wolf, badger, nor fox could have poked his fine pointed snout without hurting or wounding it.

After this check, the strategy of the wolves was so hardly put to it that the lupine army could do nothing at all. So after a few feints it retired in disorder.

His anxiety as to this event being thus relieved, Bean Flower returned to his sumptuous pavilion; but now he had to pass over a marble court, through peristyles lighted up as for a wedding, staircases which seemed to ascend for ever, and galleries which had no end to them. He was overjoyed when he reached his pavilion of pea blossoms in the centre of a large garden so blooming and verdant that he hardly

knew it again, and his bed of humming-birds' feathers, on which, in presuming he slept as happy as a king, let nobody say that I exceed the truth.

The first thing he did the next day was to explore the magnificent abode that he had found in a little pea, in which every object, however trifling, was so beautiful as perfectly to amaze him, for the furniture was quite equal to the external appearance of the pavilion. He inspected his picture gallery, his cabinet of antiquities, his collection of medals, his insects, his shells, and his library, all of which were still to him wonders both new and charming. His books especially delighted him on account of the delicate taste which had governed their choice. The finest works in literature, the most useful in science, were collected in that library for the entertainment and instruction of a long life —as the adventures of the ingenious Don Quixote de la Mancha, and Fairy Tales of every description, filled with beautiful engravings; a collection of curious and amusing Voyages and Travels, the most authentic of which are those of Gulliver and Robinson Crusoe; some excellent Almanacks, full of amusing anecdotes and faultless information, as to the moon, tides, and the best seasons for planting and sowing; innumerable treatises, written in the clearest and most simple style, on Agriculture, Horticulture, Fishing, both with the rod and the net, and the art for taming nightingales; in a word, whatever can be desired when a man has learned the value of books and the spirit of their authors. There were no learned writers but these, no other philosophers, no other poets; for this incontrovertible reason, that all learning, all philosophy, all poetry, are locked up in them and nowhere else: I give you my word for it.

Whilst he thus proceeded to take the inventory of his wealth, Bean Flower was struck by the reflection of his image in one of the looking glasses with which every saloon was adorned. Unless the looking glass was a story-teller, he must have grown, oh, wonder! upwards of three inches

since the day before; and the dark moustaches which shaded his upper lip clearly manifested that he was beginning to pass from robust boyhood to manly youth. He was a good deal mystified by this phenomenon, and was still wondering at it, when a rich clock, fixed between two pier glasses, cleared up his doubt to his great grief; for by one of the needles which marked the date of the years, Bean Flower too truly saw that he had really become six years older than he was. "Six years!" he exclaimed; "wretch that I am, my poor parents must have died of old age, or perhaps of want by this time! Alas! perhaps, they died of grief at losing me, and what must they have thought, in their last moments, of my cruel desertion, or my pitiable distress? I now understand, wicked carriage, how you go so far and so fast, for your minutes devour and consume many days at once! Go then, go then, little pea!" he added, drawing the little pea from his pouch, and darting it through the window. "Go then, detestable little pea, so far that one may never see you again!" And truly I believe no other little pea has since been seen shaped like a post-chaise, and going at the rate of fifty thousand leagues an hour.

Bean Flower came down the marble steps much sadder than he had ever felt when coming down the ladder from his bean-loft. He left the palace without once looking at it; and walked on through those wild and desert plains, without minding whether the wolves had not pitched their tents there to threaten him with a blockade. He mused as he went along, beat his forehead from time to time with his hand, and sometimes even wept with grief.

"What can I hope for any more, now that both my parents are dead?" said he, turning his portmanteau listlessly between his fingers—"now that Pea Blossom has been married six years? for the day I saw her she had completed her tenth year; and that is the age at which the princesses of her house are married! Besides, her choice was made.

What is all the world to me? my world being limited to a cottage and a bean-field, which you will never restore to me, little green pea," he added, taking it from the pod, " for the happy, happy hours of childhood never return. Go then, little green pea, go where God will carry you, and do what you are to do to the glory of your mistress, since I have lost my aged parents, my cottage, my bean-field, and the lovely Pea Blossom! Go, little green pea, go whither you please." So saying, he threw it with so much strength that the little green pea might easily have overtaken the flying carriage pea, had that been its wish. And then Bean Flower fell on the ground with grief and oppression. When he rose again the face of the whole plain had altogether changed. It had become, as far as the eye could see, a vast sea of brown and smiling verdure, over which rolled, like waving billows when kissed by the breeze, the most lovely white flowers, a boat-like shape, with butterfly's wings, tinted with violet like the bean flower, or with rose like the pea blossom; and when all their undulating brows bent together to the wind, all these tints were commingled into a new and unknown colour, a thousand times more beautiful than that of the loveliest flower garden. Bean Flower sprang forward, for he had seen everything again; his field which was enlarged, his cottage which was improved, his father and his mother who were still living, and who were hastening to meet him, with all the speed of their old limbs, to inform him, that since the day of his departure they had received tidings of him every night, besides many kind presents, which soothed their existence, and good hopes of his return, which had prevented them from dying of grief. Bean Flower, after having tenderly embraced them, took them both under his arms and led the way to his palace.

As fast as they drew near to it, the old man and his wife were more and more wonder-struck, and Bean Flower was afraid of disturbing their joy. He could not, however, help sighing, as he exclaimed, " Oh! had you but

seen Pea Blossom; but it is now six years since she was married."

"Since I was married to thee," said Pea Blossom, opening both portals. "My choice was made at that time. Do you not remember it? Come in here," continued she, kissing the old man and his wife, who were lost in admiration of her, for she too had grown in six years, and so the story points out that she was now sixteen—"Come into your son's dwelling; this is a region of soul and fancy in which nobody dies, and none grow older."

No better news could have been told to those poor people.

The nuptial festivities were duly celebrated with all the splendour befitting such exalted personages, and their abode never ceased to be a perfect example of love, constancy, and happiness. And thus finishes a fairy tale.

(II)

CHARITY

TOURIRI, Prince of Baghdad, was very rich, very learned, and had the reputation of being very wise.

He had a palace in which marbles and precious stones were carved so as to imitate trees and flowers, and he had gardens in which flowers and trees were so splendid as to imitate metals and precious stones.

He entertained beautiful women without asking anything from them but that they should be beautiful and charmingly dressed—and he had no grudge against them for being capricious or foolish.

He entertained poets without asking anything from them but that they should write verses and songs whenever the fancy came to them—and he had no grudge against them when their songs were not good.

He entertained philosophers without asking anything from them but that they should reason with him on the nature of God and the origin of the world—and he had no grudge against them when by chance their reasoning was irrational.

* * * * * *

One spring morning Touriri was walking in the principal street of Baghdad.

The heaps of oranges and the bundles of roses that filled the carts of the merchants, and teeming crowds of garments and of blue, red, and green robes shone in the whiteness of the street; magnolias leant down from the walls of the court-yards, and the water sang more lightly in the basins of the fountains.

And the young women were like half-moistened flowers, burnished with a little cool dew, and very subtly perfumed.

And because of these perfumes, these colours, and this diffused joy, the sage Touriri felt his old body becoming more supple; he remembered past days with pleasure; he no longer saw any serious objection to the world as it is; and he was not far removed from believing that life is good.

He said almost aloud:

"What pleasant warmth! and what delightful sunshine!"

* * * * * *

He met a little girl, five years old, fair and rosy and pretty, and clad in a little smock. Very grave, with a finger in her mouth, the child gazed at him through the meshes of her flaxen hair, and seemed to admire greatly Touriri's long beard, or perhaps the mysterious animals that were embroidered on his mantle.

And because she was pretty, Touriri leant down towards her, embraced her, and placed two pieces of gold in her little hand.

He afterwards met a little boy, ten years old. The child was ugly, clad in rags, and covered with freckles to the end of his wizened nose, and his eyes were without transparence, like dirty water. He stretched out his hand, and, in a shrill

voice and with the air of one reciting a lesson and thinking of something else, he declared that his mother was in bed, that he had seven little brothers, and that he had not eaten for three days.

Touriri frowned and gave him a piece of gold.

Twenty paces further on, he saw an old beggar, tattered, wretched, and crippled, and with the air of a beaten dog. His beard was yellow, like badly washed hemp, and his red eyes, without eyelashes, looked like the cracks of over-ripe figs. In a hoarse voice that wheezed like a burst bellows, slowly and without a pause, beginning again as soon as he ended, he kept saying:

"Have pity on a poor man who can no longer work. Our Lord Ormuz will reward you."

And the fetid breath of his prayer smelt of fermented drinks.

Touriri stretched out a piece of silver to him, but from such a distance that the piece fell to ground, and the old beggar knelt painfully down to pick it up.

A moment afterwards Touriri met a woman of whom one could not say whether she was young or old, and who held on her shoulder a newly-born child covered with blotches and ulcers. Humble as the dust of the road, so bent that he did not see her eyes, she followed him murmuring a persistent prayer in a feeble voice.

Not from harshness but from annoyance, Touriri hurried on; but that misery and that complaint kept trailing behind him. He searched his purse, not finding what he sought. At last, with an angry gesture, he threw to the woman some pieces of copper.

He then perceived, thirty paces in front of him, a man without arms or legs, supported against a wall. The man was singing sadly and out of tune, in a loud voice that seemed to be a voice of wood, a love song, one of Firdousi's songs, full of flowers and birds and sunshine, and it was horrible to hear.

Touriri stopped, and, as this man at any rate could not follow him, he pretended not to see him, and passed by on the other side of the street.

He walked on for some time longer, but he no longer felt the joy of life. He said aloud:

"This sunshine is unendurable!"

And he went back to his palace.

* * * * * *

Then, having reflected, he called his steward and said to him:

"Go into the Grand Street. You will meet an old beggar, and you will give him a piece of gold; then a poor woman suckling a child, and you will give her two pieces of gold; then a man without arms or legs, and you will give him three pieces of gold."

But from that day forward, every time Touriri went out into the city, a servant walked before him, giving money to all the beggars and ordering them to go away so that his master should not see them.

And the sage Touriri became more and more of an alms-giver and charitable. One would have said he had sworn that there should be no more poor in Baghdad. Every day food and money were distributed among all those who presented themselves in the lower halls of his palace. He founded a hospital for children, one for old men, one for mothers, and one for the ill and infirm.

And when he was told that somebody who had pretended to be ill or had pretended to be indigent had obtained help by a trick, he used to answer:

"Leave me in quiet I have no leisure to seek out the truth or to distinguish it from falsehood."

He spent in this way, for the benefit of others, more than nine-tenths of his immense wealth. He even reduced the pomp of his house, and kept about him only the youngest of his women, the idlest of his poets, and the most dogmatic of his philosophers.

Otherwise he continued to live delicately, amid the finest works of the art, industry, and intellect of men; and he never visited the hospitals he had founded, nor went down to the halls where he fed the unfortunate.

One day as he was walking in the town, a crowd of poor people surrounded him; they cried out together that they owed him life; and several knelt and kissed the hem of his garment. But he got angry, as if this gratitude offended him and gave him pain.

And the people regarded him as the most venerable man and the most exalted in holiness who had ever lived in Persia.

When he saw that his death was approaching, he sent away all the philosophers and poets and only kept by his bedside a beautiful girl of sixteen, praying her to say nothing to him but only to look at him with her eyes, which were as blue as cornflowers.

He died.

The poor—those who had been the poor—of Baghdad followed his funeral procession, and many wept.

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Beyond time, beyond space, beyond shape—where?

I do not know, nor does anybody else—the soul of Touriri appeared before Ormuz to be judged.

Ormuz asked him:

"What have you done on earth? What are your works?"

Touriri, quite at ease about the coming sentence, answered with modesty and sincerity:

"Doubtless I have been weak, being but a man. I have delighted in beautiful lines, in beautiful colours, sounds and perfumes, in pleasant contacts and in the futile sports of speech. But I have founded four hospitals at my expense, I have given nine parts of my goods to the poor and I have only kept the tenth for myself."

"It is true," said Ormuz, "that you were not an evil man, and that you were often even guided by a spirit of

kindliness. Nevertheless, you will not enter my Paradise this time. But your soul will descend again into another body, and you will live a fresh terrestrial life in order to expiate and learn."

Touriri was greatly astonished, and asked:

"What is it that I have to expiate, Lord?"

"Enter within yourself, and know yourself better. What was your thought when you gave your goods to the poor? And the day that you met the old beggar, the pale woman with her child, and the man without arms or legs, what did you feel in your heart?"

"An immense pity for human pain," answered Touriri.

"You lie," said Ormuz. "Their sight was, in the first place, a disagreeable surprise. It reminded you too brutally of the existence of suffering and misery. Then you disliked them for having offended your eyes by their dirt and ugliness. You disliked them also for their humiliation, the baseness with which they implored you, and the persistence of their continued prayers; and you threw them alms with disgust. You despised these unfortunates so much that you could not endure their thanks. The crudeness of popular effusions irritated you; and the delicacy of your tastes refused to these poor people the right of proving to you, by their gratitude, that they were not unworthy of your benefits. You endeavoured to suppress poverty, for you believed that it sullies the world and dishonours life. But I, who pierce into the depths of consciences, tell you that revolt and hatred were in your charity."

"But," replied Touriri, "what I hated was not the poor: it was suffering, it was evil, it was Ahriman, your eternal enemy."

"I am Ahriman," answered Ormuz.

"You, Lord?"

"I am Ahriman, for I am Ormuz. Good can come only from evil, virtue can come only from suffering."

"Is that, Lord, the best that you can accomplish?"

"Do not blaspheme. Evil will pass away. It only exists in order to produce felicity and virtue. When the earth, on which this experiment is being made, has disappeared, when all the souls of the just are with me, it will be as if evil had never existed."

"Your reasoning is specious," said Touriri, "but what conclusion is to be drawn from it in my own case? What feeling could be inspired in me by debased creatures displeasing to look at? And what did I owe them except to relieve their misery?"

"It is in order to teach you this that I am sending you back to earth."

"But, Lord . . ."

Touriri did not finish. No longer Ormuz. . . . No longer Touriri. . . . An abyss. . . .

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Nothing could be simpler or sadder than the life of Tirirou.

He was born at Uskub, of a family of indigent artisans. In his childhood he was poorly fed and often beaten. He learnt a trade by which he lived painfully. He had some of the virtues of a poor man: he was fairly honest, fairly good, and fairly resigned, but he had neither the pride nor the refinement which are the luxuries of the soul.

He married so as not to be alone. He often failed to get work. His wife and his two children died in misery. One day he fell from a scaffolding, and, badly cared for, he remained impotent in both his legs, with one arm paralyzed and an incurable wound in the other.

He had to beg. At first he did it badly. He felt ashamed, did not dare to insist, and was given hardly anything.

Little by little he acquired the habit of stretching out his hand, as if it were an implement for fishing, of humiliating attitudes, of prayers which pursued the passer-by with the hope of importuning him. Thenceforward he was given enough to prevent him from dying of hunger.

And as he had no joy in the world, whenever he possessed

a few coins he used to intoxicate himself with liquor fermented from maize.

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A very poor girl, who lived in a room close to his garret, met him several times, and took pity on him.

She came every morning to wash Tirirou's wound, made his bed, prepared his soup, and mended his clothes, without asking for anything in return.

Her name was Krika, and she was not beautiful, but her eyes were so good that one loved to meet them.

And without knowing why, Tirirou watched every morning from his mattress for the moment when Krika would get up and appear at her window.

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One day, as Tirirou was begging in his usual way, a rich man threw him a piece of gold, with disgust. At that moment Ormuz permitted the soul of Tirirou to remember that it had been that of Touriri. And Tirirou, seeing the hatred in the glance of the rich man who gave him alms, understood why Touriri had been condemned by Ormuz. He understood that in his former life, though he had relieved the poor, he, too, had hated them because of their humiliation and ugliness; that is to say, because of things for which they were not responsible.

Next morning, when Krika came to wash his wound, he watched her. He saw that she did it without disgust, and that her eyes remained gentle and tranquil. He perceived that the young girl who tended him and did not hold herself aloof from him—although he was horrible even among his fellows—was truly good and saintly.

When she finished bandaging him, he kissed her hand silently and wept. And Ormuz granted him the favour of dying on that very night.

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"What have you understood?" asked Ormuz of the soul or Touriri-Tirirou.

"This, Lord: We must serve the poor in poverty. We must enter into their souls, and not despise them for a humiliation and narrowness of spirit to which we also might have been reduced if we had been overwhelmed by the same necessities; to love them at least for their resignation, they who form the greater number, and whose united anger would sweep away the rich like wisps of straw; and, lastly, to seek whether there does not exist in them some remnant of nobility and dignity. And we must serve them humbly; just as we resign ourselves to our own sufferings, so must we resign ourselves to the misery of others, in so far as it offends our own delicacy; we must not, when we relieve them, rebel against this misery, but accept it as one accepts the mysterious designs of Him who alone knows the reasons of things. For the aim of the Universe is not the production of beauty but of goodness."

"That is not so far wrong," said Ormuz. "Good servant, enter into thy rest."

(III)

NAUSICAA

AFTER he had slain the suitors with his arrows, the ingenious Ulysses, full of wisdom and memories, passed tranquil days in his palace at Ithaca. Every evening, seated between his wife, Penelope, and his son, Telemachus, he told them of his travels, and when he had finished, he began again.

One of the adventures which he related most frequently was his meeting with Nausicaa, the daughter of Alcinous, king of the Phæacians.

"Never," he would say, "shall I forget how beautiful, courteous, and helpful she appeared to me. For three days and three nights I had been floating on the vast sea, clinging

to a beam of my broken raft. At last a wave lifted me up and drove me towards the mouth of a river. I climbed on to the bank; a wood was near; I gathered leaves, and as I was naked, I covered myself with them. I fell asleep. . . . Suddenly a noise of pouring water wakened me, then exclamations. I opened my eyes and I saw some girls who were playing at ball on the shore. The ball had just fallen into the rapid current. I got up, taking care to hide my nakedness with a leafy bough. I advanced towards the most beautiful of the girls. . . ."

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"You have already told us that, my dear," interrupted Penelope.

"It is very likely," said Ulysses.

"What difference does it make?" said Telemachus.

Ulysses resumed:

"I can still see her in my mind's eye on her car, driving her mules with their sounding bells. The car was full of fine white linen and dresses of coloured wool which the little princess and her companions had just washed in the stream. And, as she stood, leaning forward a little and pulling the reins, the evening wind blew her golden hair—ill held by her head-band—about her brow, and pressed her pliant robe against her well-formed limbs."

"And then?" asked Telemachus.

"She was perfectly brought up," continued Ulysses. "When we approached the town, she prayed me to leave her so that nobody could make any ill remark about her from seeing her with a man! But from the way in which I was welcomed in the palace of Alcinous, I saw that she had spoken of me to her noble parents. I did not see her again except at the moment of my departure. She said to me: 'I salute you, O guest, in order that you may not forget me in your own land, for it is to me that you owe your life.' And I answered her: 'Nausicaa, daughter of the magnanimous Alcinous, if the mighty spouse of Hera wills me to enjoy

the moment of return and that I should re-enter my dwelling, I will daily within its walls offer my prayers to you as to a goddess; for it is you who have saved me.' A more beautiful or better girl I have never met, and as my travels are over, I am very sure I never shall meet one."

"Do you think that she is married now?" asked Telemachus.

"She was only fifteen years of age and not yet betrothed."

"Did you tell her that you had a son?"

"Yes, and that I was consumed with the desire of seeing him again."

"And did you speak well of me to her?"

"I did, although I scarcely knew you, for I had left Ithaca when you were quite a little child in your mother's arms."

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Meanwhile, Penelope, desiring to see her son married, presented to him in succession the fairest virgins of the land, the daughters of the princes of Dulichios, of Samos, and of Zacynthos. Each time Telemachus said:

"I will not have her, for I know another who is better and more beautiful."

"Who?"

"Nausicaa, the daughter of the king of the Phæacians."

"How can you say that you know her when you have never seen her?"

"Well, I shall see her," replied Telemachus.

One day he said to his father:

"My heart wishes, O illustrious father, that, cleaving the fish-frequented sea in a ship, I sail towards the island of the Phæacians, and that I go and ask the hand of the fair Nausicaa from King Alcinous. For I am consumed with love for that virgin whom my eyes have never beheld; and, if you oppose my design, unwedded will I grow old in your palace and you shall have no grandson."

The ingenious Ulysses answered:

"It is doubtless a god who has put this desire into your heart. Since I spoke to you of the princess who was washing her linen in the stream, you disdain the succulent meats served at our table, and black circles grow around your eyes. Take then with you thirty sailors in a swift vessel and seek her whom you do not know and without whom you cannot live. But I must warn you of the dangers of the journey. If the wind drives you towards the island of Polyphemus, take care not to approach it; or, if the tempest casts you on the shore, hide yourself, and, as soon as your ship can get to sea, fly and do not attempt to see the Cyclops. I put out his eye formerly; but though he is blind he is still formidable. Fly also from the island of the Lotus-eaters, or, if you land among them, do not eat the flower which they will offer you, for it makes one lose his memory. Fear also the island of Ææa, the kingdom of fair-haired Circe whose charming-rod changes men into swine. Yet if ill fortune wills that you meet her on your way, here is a plant whose root is black and whose flower is white as milk. The gods call it *moly*, and it was given to me by Mercury. By its means you will render powerless the evil spells of that famous witch."

Ulysses added other advice concerning the dangers of the island of the Sirens, of the island of the Sun, and of the island of the Læstrygonians. He said in conclusion:

"Remember my words, my son, for I would not have you repeat my fatal adventures."

"I will remember," said Telemachus. "Moreover, every obstacle and even every pleasure will be my enemy if it could delay my arrival in the island of the wise Alcinous."

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Thus Telemachus set out, his heart full of Nausicaa.

A gale took him out of his course, and, as he was passing beside the island of Polyphemus, he was curious to see the giant whom his father had formerly conquered. He said to himself:

" The danger is not great, for Polyphemus is blind."

He disembarked alone, leaving his ship at anchor at the end of a bay, and he was visible and unprotected in the rich, undulating plain, sprinkled with flocks and tufts of trees. On the horizon, behind a dip in the hill, an enormous head arose, then shoulders like those polished rocks that stretch out into the sea, then a chest as bushy as a ravine. . . .

An instant afterwards, a huge hand seized Telemachus, and he saw, bending over him, an eye as large as a shield.

" You are not blind, then? " asked Telemachus.

" My father, Neptune, has cured me," answered Polyphemus. " It was a little man of your species who deprived me of the light of day, and that is why I am going to eat you."

" You would make a mistake," said Telemachus; " for if you let me live, I would amuse you by telling you beautiful stories."

" I am listening," said Polyphemus.

Telemachus began the story of the Trojan war. When night came the Cyclops said:

" It is time to sleep. But I will not eat you this evening, for I want to know the rest."

Each evening the Cyclops said the same thing, and this lasted for three years.

The first year Telemachus told of the siege of Priam's city; the second year of the return of Menelaus and Agamemnon; the third year of the return of Ulysses, his adventures and his marvellous wiles.

" You are very bold," said Polyphemus, " thus to praise before me the little man who did me so great an injury."

" But," answered Telemachus, " the more I show the cleverness of that man, the less disgraceful will it be for you to have been conquered by him."

" That is plausible," said the giant, " and I pardon you. Doubtless I would talk in a different way if a god had

not given me back my sight. But past evils are but a dream.

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Towards the end of the third year, Telemachus searched his memory in vain. He no longer found anything to tell the giant. Then he began the same stories over again. Polyphemus took the same pleasure in them, and this lasted for three more years.

But Telemachus did not feel that he had the courage to repeat a third time the story of the siege of Ilium and of the return of the heroes. He confessed it to Polyphemus, and added:

"I would rather you ate me. I shall only regret one thing as I die: it is that I have not seen the fair Nausicaa."

He spoke at length of his love and his grief, and suddenly he saw in the eye of the Cyclops a tear as large as a pumpkin.

"Go," said the Cyclops, "go and seek her whom you love. Why did you not speak to me sooner? . . ."

"I see," thought Telemachus, "that I would have done better to have begun with that. I have lost six years through my error. It is true that shame prevented me from telling my secret before. If I disclosed it, it was because I believed I was going to die."

He constructed a canoe (for the ship he had left in the bay had long since disappeared), and set off afresh on the deep sea.

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Another tempest threw him on Circe's island.

He saw, at the entrance to a large forest, in a swinging hammock made of creepers interwoven with garlands of flowers, a woman who was gently rocking herself.

She wore on her head a mitre encrusted with rubies; her long eyebrows joined together over her eyes; her mouth was redder than a fresh wound; her bosom and her arms were yellow as saffron; flowers formed of precious stones were strewn over her transparent robe, which was the colour of a

hyacinth, and she smiled through the tawny hair which completely enveloped her.

Her magician's wand was passed through her girdle, like a sword.

Circe looked at Telemachus.

The young hero searched beneath his tunic for the flower, *moly*, the black and white flower his father had given him before his departure. He perceived that he no longer had it.

" I am lost," he thought. " She is going to touch me with her wand, and I shall be like swine who eat acorns."

But Circe said to him in a gentle voice:

" Follow me, young stranger, and come and rest with me."

He followed her. Soon they arrived at her palace, which was a hundred times more beautiful than that of Ulysses.

Along the way, in the depths of the woods and ravines, swine and wolves that had once been men, shipwrecked on the island, ran after the witch's steps; and although she had taken a long rod pointed with iron with which she pricked them cruelly, they tried to lick her bare feet.

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For three years Telemachus made his couch with the magician.

Then, one day he grew ashamed. He felt extremely wearied, and he discovered that he had not ceased to love the daughter of Alcinous, the innocent virgin with the blue eyes, her whom he had never seen.

But he thought:

" If I want to go away, the witch will be angry and transform me into an animal, and thus I shall never see Nausicaa."

Now, Circe, on her part, was weary of her companion. She began to hate him, because she had loved him. She rose one night from her purple couch and went out, taking her wand, and struck him with it over his heart.

But Telemachus kept his form and his countenance. It

was because at that moment he was thinking of Nausicaa, and his heart was full of his love.

"Go away! go away!" shrieked the witch.

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Telemachus found his canoe, set forth again on the sea, and a third tempest threw him on the island of the Lotus-eaters.

They were polished men, full of intelligence, and of equable and gentle temper.

Their king offered Telemachus a flower of the lotus.

"I shall not eat it," said the young hero, "for this is the flower of forgetfulness, and I wish to remember."

"Yet forgetfulness is a great good," replied the king. "Thanks to this flower, which is our only food, we know nothing of pain, regret, desire, and all the passions that trouble unhappy mortals. But we force nobody to eat the divine flower."

Telemachus lived for some weeks on the provisions he had saved from his shipwreck. Then, as there were not in the island either fruits or animals fit to eat, he nourished himself as well as he could on shell-fish and other fishes.

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"Is it true," he asked the king, "that the lotus-flower makes men forget even what they most desire or what causes them to suffer most?"

"Assuredly it does," said the king.

"Oh!" said Telemachus, "it would never make me forget the fair Nausicaa."

"Try it, and see."

"If I try it, it is because I am very sure that the lotus could not do what the artifices of a magician have been unable to accomplish."

He ate the flower and fell asleep.

I mean that he began to live in the same way as the gentle Lotus-eaters, enjoying the present hour and caring for nothing else. Only, he sometimes felt in the depths of his heart, as

it were, the memory of an old wound, without being able to know exactly what it was.

When he awoke, he had not forgotten the daughter of Alcinous. But twenty years had slipped by without his noticing their passage. His love had needed all that time to conquer the influence of the flower of forgetfulness.

"They are the best twenty years of your life," the king told him.

But Telemachus did not believe it.

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He politely took leave of his hosts.

I shall not tell you of the other adventures in which he was engaged, sometimes by necessity, sometimes by the curiosity of seeing new things, either in the island of the Sirens, or in the island of the Sun, or in the island of the Læstrygonians, nor how his love was strong enough to extricate him from all these dangers and to tear him away from these various stopping-places.

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A last tempest drove him towards the mouth of a river in the desired island, the land of the Phæacians. He reached the bank; a wood was near. He gathered leaves, and, as he was naked, he covered himself with them. He fell asleep. . . . Suddenly a noise of pouring water wakened him.

Telemachus opened his eyes and saw servants who were washing linen under the orders of an aged woman who was richly clad.

He got up, and, taking care to hide his nakedness with a leafy bough, he approached the woman. Her figure was stout and clumsy, and grey hairs escaped from her head-band. It was clear that she had once been beautiful, but she was so no longer.

Telemachus asked her for hospitality. She answered him with kindness and made her women give him some clothes.

"And now, my guest, I am going to lead you to the King's house."

"Are you the Queen?" asked Telemachus.

"It is as you have spoken, O stranger."

Then Telemachus, rejoicing in his heart, exclaimed:

"May the gods grant long life to the mother of the fair Nausicaa!"

"I am Nausicaa," answered the Queen. . . . "But what ails you, venerable old man? . . ."

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In his canoe, which he hastily repaired, old Telemachus gained the open sea without once glancing behind him.

(IV)

PRINCESS MIMI'S LOVERS

. . . THEN Cinderella married the king's son.

Some months afterwards, the king's son, having lost his father, became king in his turn.

Then Queen Cinderella brought into the world a little girl, whose name was Princess Mimi.

Princess Mimi was as beautiful as the day. Her rosy face and her light golden hair, through which the sun gleamed, made her look like a moss-rose; and she was very intelligent.

When she was fifteen years old, it was necessary for her to marry: for such was the law of the kingdom.

But, as she was a princess, she could only marry a prince.

Now, there were at that time, in all the surrounding countries, only two princes: Prince Polyphemus, who was seven times bigger than Princess Mimi, and Prince Tom Thumb, who was seven times smaller than she was.

And both were in love with Princess Mimi; but Mimi was not in love with either of them, for one was too big and the other was too small.

Nevertheless, the king ordered her to choose one of the

two princes before the month was over; and he allowed the two princes to pay their court to the princess.

And it was agreed that he who should be rejected would forgive the other and do him no injury.

Polyphemus came with presents. They were oxen, sheep, and baskets filled with cheese and fruits. And he was attended by giant warriors, clothed in the skins of animals sewn together.

Tom Thumb brought birds in a gilded cage, flowers, and jewels, and he was attended by jesters and dancers clothed in silk and wearing caps with bells.

Polyphemus related his history to the princess.

"Do not believe," he said to her, "what a poet called Homer has told about me. In the first place, he said I had but one eye, and you see I have two. It is true, indeed, that I ate the men who landed in my island; but, if I did this, it was because they were very small, and I had no more scruple about eating them than you would have in picking the bone of a plover or a young rabbit at the table of the king, your father. But one day a Greek, named Ulysses, made me understand that these little men were yet men like myself, that they often had families, and that I did them a great injury by eating them. From that day forward, I have lived only on the flesh and milk of my flocks. For I am not of a bad disposition; and even, you see, Princess Mimi, that, strong and big as I am, with you I am as gentle as a new-born lamb."

And, out of vanity, Polyphemus did not say that Ulysses had conquered him in spite of his strength, and had put out his eyes while he slept, and that he had only recovered his sight by the remedies of a learned magician.

And Mimi thought:

"All the same, he would be capable of eating me if he were hungry. On the other hand, Prince Tom Thumb is so small that I could gobble him up if I wanted."

Tom Thumb related his history in his turn.

" Perfidious enchanters," said he, " tried to lead me astray in the forest with my six brothers. But I scattered white pebbles behind me so that we found our way. Unluckily I met the Ogre. He brought us into his palace and placed us in his big bed. I discovered that he intended to kill us the next morning. Then I put the Ogre's seven daughters into the big bed in our place, and it was they whom the Ogre slaughtered. And I took his seven-league boots, which were of great use to me in a war I had to wage against a neighbouring king: for they allowed me to discover all the enemy's movements. And thus I became a very powerful prince. But I gave up wearing the boots, and I put them in the museum of my palace, because they are uncomfortable for my feet, and also because, as they compel those who wear them to go over seven leagues at every stride, they are not suitable for ordinary walking. But I will show them to you, Princess Mimi."

And, out of vanity, Tom Thumb did not say that he was the son of a poor wood-cutter. And, as Polyphemus had done, he mixed the true with the false: for love, interest, and sometimes imagination make us always lie a little.

And Princess Mimi was amazed at the cleverness of Prince Tom Thumb.

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One day Polyphemus, who was lying with his legs stretched out in the princess's boudoir, which he completely filled; said to her in a voice like thunder, whose reverberations shook the stained glass of the windows and jolted the fragile little tables:

" I am simple-minded, but I have an honest heart, and I am strong. I can tear off fragments of rocks and hurl them into the sea; I can knock down oxen with a slight blow of my fist, and the lions are afraid of me. Come to my country. There you will see mountains, blue in the morning and rose-coloured in the evening, with great lakes like mirrors, and forests as old as the world. I will carry you wherever you

wish. For you I will gather, on the highest peaks, flowers with which no woman has ever yet adorned herself. My companions and myself will be your slaves. Is it not a rare destiny to be like a little goddess waited upon by giants, to be the sole queen—little darling that you are—of forests and mountains, of torrents and great lakes, of eagles and lions?"

The princess was a little moved as she heard these words. She shuddered, and yet was joyous, like a wren that, held in the hollow of a big hand, yet felt that that hand adored her, and that it was she who had made a captive of the huge bird-catcher.

But Tom Thumb, snuggling in a fold of Mimi's robe, said to her in his shrill and crystal voice:

"Take me: I occupy such a little space! Small as I am, you will have the pleasure of thinking that you can do with me whatever you please. I will love you intelligently. I will tell you so in a hundred different ways, and according as you will be sad or gay, lively or quiet, according to the hour and the season of the year, I will suit my words and my caresses to the secret of your heart. And I will have a thousand artifices to amuse you. I will surround you with all that the industry of men has invented to give pleasure to life. You will have beneath your eyes only elegant objects; you will enjoy beautiful fabrics, well carved statues, jewels and perfumes. I will tell you stories and I will have comedies performed for you by ingenious actors. I can sing, play the mandolin, and compose verses. It is finer to express harmoniously things that have been seen and felt than it is to cross torrents, more difficult to conquer words than to conquer lions, rarer to beautify life by the grace of the mind than to exercise the muscles of the body."

And Princess Mimi smiled and dreamed, as if this speech had lulled her deliciously.

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One morning she said to her two suitors:

"Make me some verses, I beg you."

Prince Tom Thumb thought for a moment, then repeated these verses, small like himself:

"A prince I am
(You know the same),
Yet I am small,
Tom Thumb my name.

"A tiny body
Far from stout.
No strength have I
To brag about.

"A drop of dew
Upon a briar
Humbly reflects
The heavens entire.

"A perfume drop
The breath encloses
Of many thousand
Living roses.

"Though I am small,
My claim I state.
It simply is
My love is great." [1]

[1] Tom Thumb's verses were in French, and the above lines are a very inadequate translation. His exact words were these:

"Bien qu'étant prince
(Chacun le sait),
Je suis fort mince,
J'ai nom Poucet.

"Corps minuscule,
Gros comme rien,
Ne suis Hercule:
M'en moque bien!

"La goutelette
Sur l'églantier
Humble, reflète
Le ciel entier.

"Et mille roses
(Une moisson!)
Vivent encloses
Dans un flacon.

"J'ai (mais qu'importe?)
Corps frêle et court.
En moi je porte
Si grand amour!"

"Charming! exquisite!" said the Princess.

And she felt proud to be loved by a little man who strung words together with so much ease.

"Bah!" said Polyphemus, "it ought not to be very difficult to make such little verses."

"Try," said Tom Thumb.

The giant tried all day long. He could do nothing. Sometimes he struck his forehead angrily with his clenched fist, but this brought nothing forth. He was astonished and enraged at being so powerless to express what he felt so keenly. That seemed to him unjust. He remained motionless, his mouth half-open, and with a vague look in his eye. At last, towards evening, he remembered that *love* rhymes with *dove*. Some hours afterwards he went to Mimi, and said:

"You are as beautiful as a dove,
And I assure you, Princess, I have given you all my love."

The Princess burst into laughter.

"Are not these verses good?" asked Polyphemus.

Tom Thumb was triumphant.

"Still it was not so difficult!" he said. "You had only to say:

"Oh, Princess fair, although you're small,
For me you fill the world and all.[1]

Or:

"A giant I, madly in love,
And dying for a little dove.[2]

Or this:

"Tiny, tiny girl,
You have pierced my heart,
You are only as tall as my ankle,
But you struck me with love's dart.[3]

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[1] "Vous êtes bien petite, ô ma Princesse blonde:
Mais votre petitesse emplit pour moi le monde!"

[2] "Je suis un bon géant très fou
Qui meurs d'amour pour un joujou."

[3] "O petite, petite fille
Qui m'as percé d'un trait vainqueur,
Toi qui me viens à la cheville,
Comment donc as-tu fait pour atteindre mon cœur?"

Or if you prefer it:

> " In two words, this is how it goes,
> Once a tall oak fell in love with a rose." [1]

" Adorable! " said the Princess.

But she saw in the giant's eye a tear as large as an egg; and he had such an unhappy air that she had pity on him. At the same time it seemed to her that Tom Thumb showed too much satisfaction with his own cleverness, and that this was in bad taste. She was thus the more touched by the gentleness and simplicity of Polyphemus.

" After all," she said to herself, " he could crush his rival with a fillip of his thumb, or simply put him in his pocket. Although I myself am bigger than Tom Thumb, he could carry me off under his arm and do what he wished with me. He must be very good, for he does none of these things."

And she said to Polyphemus:

" Do not grieve, my friend. Your verses are not very good; but your heart is in them, and, after all, they say the essential."

" But," said Tom Thumb, " they are not verses: for the first has nine syllables, and the second has fourteen, and no cæsura."

" Then," said the Princess, " they are the verses of a Futurist poet. Be silent, Prince Tom Thumb! "

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The palace of Princess Mimi was surrounded by a large park, through which flowed a blue river. In the middle of the river, on a little island, like a nosegay, was a summer-house made of fine coloured china, with windows made of precious stones and sashes of silver. The clever architect had given to this summer-house the appearance of an immense tulip. It was the Princess's custom to spend hours here, for

[1] " Je m'en vais en deux mots vous raconter la chose:
Il était un grand chêne amoureux d'une rose."

the joy of feeling herself suspended between the azure of the river and the azure of the sky.

One day, as she was here, half-reclining and half-dreaming, her eyes half-closed and singing melancholy songs in a low voice, she did not perceive that the river was rising around her. At last the noise of the waves woke her out of her half-sleep, and, opening a window, she saw that the bridge which led to the little island was submerged, and that the water would soon come into the summer-house. She was frightened and cried out.

On the bank, the King, her father, Queen Cinderella, her mother, and Prince Tom Thumb were in despair, and all three together were raising their hands to heaven. Suddenly, Polyphemus appeared. He entered the stream, and the water hardly reached his girdle. In three steps he reached the summer house, grasped the Princess carefully, and brought her to the bank.

" Oh ! " said Mimi to herself, " how fine it is to be big and strong ! And how pleasant it is to feel oneself thus protected ! With him I could sleep tranquilly, and I should never have a fear or a care. I think it is he whom I shall choose."

She smiled on the giant, and the smile of that little mouth caused a tremor of pleasure to pass over the whole huge body of Polyphemus.

The following day she saw Tom Thumb so sad that, to console him, she proposed taking a walk with him through the fields.

She held him by the hand, and she pretended to dawdle so as not to walk too quickly, and not tire out her companion.

They met a flock of sheep. And as Tom Thumb wore that day a doublet of cherry-coloured satin, a ram, who disliked that colour, left the flock and, with horns lowered, rushed straight at the little prince.

Tom Thumb, who was very proud, kept his countenance, although he was greatly frightened. But at the moment

when the ram was going to reach him, Mimi took Tom Thumb in her arms, and, at the same time, adroitly opened her parasol in the ram's nose. He stopped in surprise and almost immediately retraced his steps.

"He does well to go off," said Tom Thumb. "I was not afraid of him, and you saw, Princess, how ready I was for him."

"Yes, little Prince, I know that you are brave," said Mimi.

And she thought:

"Oh! how good it is to protect those weaker than yourself! Certainly one must love those to whom one is useful; above all, when they are handsome and clever like this little man."

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On the next day, Tom Thumb presented the Princess with a little rose, still almost a bud, but no rose had ever so rosy a tint or a more delicate perfume.

Mimi took the flower, saying:

"Thanks, dear little Prince."

She wore on that day a robe that changed its colour as it reflected the light, and that seemed to be made of the same fabric as the wings of a dragon-fly.

"Ah!" said Tom Thumb, "what a beautiful dress you are wearing!"

"Isn't it?" said Mimi. "And look how well your rose goes with my bodice."

"A rose!" thought Polyphemus, "what is a rose? I will show her what nosegay I can give her."

He went off to India; there he discovered a large tree covered with brilliant blooms as big as the bells of a cathedral; and he tore it up by the roots and brought it to Mimi with an air of triumph.

"It is very beautiful," said Mimi, laughing. "But what would you have me do with it, my dear Prince? I cannot put it in my bodice or in my hair."

The good giant was ashamed, and did not know what to say.

As he cast down his eyes, he noticed that Prince Tom Thumb was wearing a suit of the same stuff as the Princess's robe.

" Oh ! " said he.

" Yes," she answered, " I have had this fine suit made for him out of a little piece that was left over from my robe. I could not give it to you, for it would not have been enough to make even a knot in your tie."

And, turning towards the King:

" Since the hour has come to decide, my father, it is Prince Tom Thumb that I will take as my husband. Prince Polyphemus will forgive me. I have much esteem for him, and I am sorry for his disappointment."

The giant heaved a sigh that made the whole palace tremble; then, as he was a gentleman, he loyally offered Tom Thumb his huge hand, in which that of the little Prince was lost.

" Make her happy," he said to him.

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On the day of the wedding Princess Mimi was neither sad nor gay; for she had an undoubted affection for Tom Thumb but she was not in love with him.

At the moment the procession started for the church, it was announced that Prince Charming, who had been on his travels for several years, had just come back, and that he would be present at the wedding.

Prince Charming appeared. He was a little taller than the princess, handsome, with a fine bearing, and full of intelligence. In brief, Prince Charming was charming.

The Princess had never seen him, and had never even heard him spoken of. But as soon as he presented himself, she turned quite pale, then quite red, and she said these words in spite of herself:

" Prince Charming, I was expecting you. I love you and

I feel that you love me. But I have pledged my faith to this poor little man, and I cannot break my pledge."

As she said this she nearly fell into a swoon.

Polyphemus leant down to Tom Thumb:

"Little Prince, will you not have the courage to do what I did?"

"But I love her," said Tom Thumb.

"That is the reason," said the good giant.

"Madam," said Tom Thumb to Princess Mimi, "this good giant is right. I love you too much to possess you against your will. We did not foresee the arrival of Prince Charming. Marry him, since you love him."

Princess Mimi, in a burst of joy, lifted the little Prince off the ground and kissed him on both cheeks, saying:

"Ah, how nice of you to do that!"

Tom Thumb wept and said:

"That is crueller than all the rest."

"Come, poor little Prince," said Polyphemus. "You will tell me all about your grief. We will speak of her every day, and we will watch over her from afar."

He took Tom Thumb on his shoulder, and soon both disappeared over the horizon.

HONORÉ DE BALZAC

(1799–1850)

(I)

HOW THE CHÂTEAU D'AZAY CAME TO BE BUILT

JEHAN, son of Simon Fourniez, called Simonnin, a citizen of Tours—originally of the village of Moulinot, near to Beaune, whence, in imitation of certain persons, he took the name when he became steward to Louis the Eleventh—had to fly one day into Languedoc with his wife, having fallen into great disgrace, and left his son Jacques penniless in Touraine. This youth, who possessed nothing in the world except his good looks, his sword and spurs, but whom worn-out old men would have considered very well off, had in his head a firm intention to save his father and mother and make his fortune at the court, then holden in Touraine. At early dawn this good Tourainian left his lodging and, enveloped in his mantle, all except his nose, which he left open to the air, and his stomach empty, walked about the town without any trouble of digestion. He entered the churches, thought them beautiful, looked into the chapels, flicked the flies from the pictures, and counted the columns all after the manner of a man who knew not what to do with his time or his money. At other times he feigned to recite his paternosters, but really made mute prayers to the ladies, offering them holy water when leaving, followed them afar off, and endeavoured by these little services to encounter some adventure, in which at the peril of his life he would find for himself a protector or a gracious mistress. He had in his girdle two doubloons

which he spared far more than his skin, because that would be replaced, but the doubloons never. Each day he took from his little hoard the price of a roll and a few apples, with which he sustained life, and drank at his will and discretion of the water of the Loire. This wholesome and prudent diet, besides being good for his doubloons, kept him frisky and light as a greyhound, gave him a clear understanding and a warm heart, for the water of the Loire is of all syrups the most strengthening, because having its course afar off it is invigorated by its long run, through many strands, before it reaches Tours. So you may be sure that the poor fellow imagined a thousand and one good fortunes and lucky adventures, and what is more, almost believed them true. Oh! the good times!

One evening Jacques de Beaune (he kept the name although he was not lord of Beaune) was walking along the embankment, occupied in cursing his star and everything, for his last doubloon was with scant respect upon the point of quitting him; when at the corner of a little street he nearly ran against a veiled lady, whose sweet odour gratified his amorous senses. This fair pedestrian was bravely mounted on pretty pattens, wore a beautiful dress of Italian velvet, with wide slashed satin sleeves; while, as a sign of her great fortune, through her veil a white diamond of reasonable size shone upon her forehead like the rays of the setting sun among her tresses, which were so delicately rolled, built up, and so neat that they must have taken her maids quite three hours to arrange. She walked like a lady who was only accustomed to a litter. One of her pages followed her, well armed. She was evidently some light o' love belonging to a noble of high rank, or a lady of the court, since she held her dress off the ground and bent her back like a woman of quality. Lady or courtesan she pleased Jacques de Beaune, who, far from turning up his nose at her, conceived the wild idea of attaching himself to her for life. With this in view he determined to follow

her in order to ascertain whither she would lead him—to Paradise or to the limbo of hell—to a gibbet or to an abode of love. Anything was a gleam of hope to him in the depths of his misery. The lady strolled along the bank of the Loire towards Plessis, inhaling like a fish the fine freshness of the water, toying, sauntering like a little mouse who wishes to see and taste everything. When the page perceived that Jacques de Beaune persistently followed his mistress in all her movements, stopped when she stopped, and watched her trifling, in a barefaced fashion, as if he had a right so to do, he turned brusquely round with a savage and threatening face, like that of a dog who says, "Stand back, sir!" But the good Tourainian had his wits about him, believing that if a cat may look at a king, he, a baptized Christian, might certainly look at a pretty woman; he stepped forward, and feigning to grin at the page, he strutted now behind and now before the lady. She said nothing, but looked at the sky, which was putting on its nightcap, the stars and everything which could give her pleasure. At last, arrived opposite Portillon, she stood still, and in order to see better, cast her veil back over her shoulder, and in so doing cast upon the youth the glance of a clever woman who looks around to see if there is any danger of being robbed.

I may tell you that Jacques de Beaune was a thorough ladies' man, could walk by the side of a princess without disgracing her, had a brave and resolute air which pleased the sex, and if he was a little browned by the sun from being so much in the open air, his skin would look white enough under the canopy of a bed. The glance, keen as a needle, which the lady threw him appeared to him more animated than that with which she would have honoured her prayer-book. Upon it he built the hope of a windfall of love, and resolved to push the adventure to the very edge of the petticoat, risking to go still further, not only his lips, which he held of little account, but his two ears and some-

thing else besides. He followed into the town the lady, who returned by the Rue des Trois-Pucelles, and led the gallant through a labyrinth of little streets to the square in which is at the present time situated the Hôtel de la Crouzille. There she stopped at the door of a splendid mansion, at which the page knocked. A servant opened it, and the lady went in and closed the door, leaving the Sieur de Beaune open-mouthed, stupefied, and as foolish as Monseigneur St. Denis when he was trying to pick up his head. He raised his nose in the air to see if some token of favour would be thrown him, and saw nothing except a light which went up the stairs, through the rooms, and rested before a fine window, where probably the lady was also. You can believe that the poor lover remained melancholy and dreaming, not knowing what to do. The window gave a sudden creak and broke his reverie. Fancying that the lady was about to call him, he looked up again, and but for the friendly shelter of the balcony, which was a helmet to him, he would have received a stream of water and the utensil which contained it, since the handle only remained in the grasp of the person who delivered the deluge. Jacques de Beaune, delighted at this, did not lose the opportunity, but flung himself against the wall, crying, "I am killed," with a feeble voice. Then stretching himself upon the fragments of broken china, he lay as if dead, awaiting the issue. The servants rushed out in a state of alarm, fearing their mistress, to whom they had confessed their fault, and picked up the wounded man, who could hardly restrain his laughter at being then carried up the stairs.

"He is cold," said the page.

"He is covered with blood," said the butler, who while feeling his pulse had wetted his hand.

"If he revives," said the guilty one, "I will pay for a mass to Saint Gatien."

"Madame takes after her late father, and if she does not have thee hanged, the least mitigation of thy penalty will

be that thou wilt be kicked out of her house and service," said another. "Certes, he's dead enough, he is so heavy."

"Ah! I am in the house of a very great lady," thought Jacques.

"Alas! is he really dead?" demanded the author of the calamity. While with great labour the Tourainian was being carried up the stairs, his doublet caught on a projection, and the dead man cried, "Ah, my doublet!"

"He groans," said the culprit, with a sigh of relief.

The Regent's servants (for this was the house of the Regent, the daughter of King Louis XI, of virtuous memory) brought Jacques de Beaune into a room, and laid him stiff and stark upon a table, not thinking for a moment that he could be saved.

"Run and fetch a surgeon," cried Madame de Beaujeu. "Run here, run there!"

The servants were down the stairs in a trice. The good lady Regent despatched her attendants for ointment, for linen to bind the wounds, for goulard-water, for so many things that she remained alone. Gazing upon this splendid and senseless man, she cried aloud, admiring his presence and his features, handsome even in death: "Ah, God wishes to punish me. Just for one poor little time in my life has there been born in me, and taken possession of me, a naughty idea, and my patron saint is angry, and deprives me of the sweetest gentleman I have ever seen. By the rood, and by the soul of my father, I will hang every man who had a hand in this!"

"Madame," cried Jacques de Beaune, springing from the table, and falling at the feet of the Regent, "I will live to serve you, and am so little bruised that I promise you this night as many joys as there are months in the year, in imitation of the Sieur Hercules, a pagan baron. For the last twenty days," he went on (thinking that matters would be smoothed by a little lying), "I have met you again and again. I fell madly in love with you, yet dared not, by

reason of my great respect for your person, make an advance. You can imagine how intoxicated I must have been with your royal beauties, to have invented the trick to which I owe the happiness of being at your feet."

Thereupon he kissed her amorously, and gave her a look that would overcome any scruples. The Regent by means of time, which respects not queens, was, as everyone knows, in her middle age. In this critical and autumnal season, women formerly virtuous and loverless desire now here, now there, to enjoy, unknown to the world, certain hours of love, in order that they may not arrive in the other world with hands and heart alike empty, through having left the fruit of the tree of knowledge untasted. The lady of Beaujeu, without appearing to be astonished while listening to the promises of this young man, since royal personages ought to be accustomed to having them by dozens, kept this ambition in the depths of her memory, or of her registry of love, which caught fire at his words. Then she raised the Tourainian, who still found in his misery the courage to smile at his mistress, who had the majesty of a full-blown rose, ears like shoes, and the complexion of a sick cat, but was so well dressed, so fine in figure, so royal of foot, and so queenly in carriage, that he might still find in this affair means to gain his original object.

"Who are you?" asked the Regent, putting on the stern look of her father.

"I am your very faithful subject, Jacques de Beaune, son of your steward, who has fallen into disgrace in spite of his faithful services."

"Ah, well," replied the lady, "lay yourself on the table again. I hear someone coming; and it is not fit that my people should think me your accomplice in this farce and mummery."

The good fellow perceived by the soft sound of her voice that he was pardoned the enormity of his love. He lay down upon the table again, and remembered how certain

lords had ridden to court in an old stirrup—a thought which perfectly reconciled him to his present position.

"Good," said the Regent to her maid-servants, "nothing is needed. This gentleman is better; thanks to heaven and the Holy Virgin, there will be no murder in my house."

Thus saying, she passed her hands through the locks of the lover who had fallen to her from the skies, and taking a little reviving water she bathed his temples, undid his doublet, and under pretence of aiding his recovery, verified better than an expert how soft and young was the skin of this young fellow and bold promiser of bliss, and all by-standers, men and women, were amazed to see the Regent act thus. But humanity never misbecomes those of royal blood. Jacques stood up, and appeared to come to his senses, thanked the Regent most humbly, and dismissed the physicians, master surgeons, and other imps in black, saying that he had thoroughly recovered. Then he gave his name, and saluting Madame de Beaujeu, wished to depart, as though afraid of her on account of his father's disgrace, but no doubt horrified at his terrible vow.

"I cannot permit it," said she. "Persons who come to my house should not meet with such treatment as you have encountered. The Sieur de Beaune will sup here," she added to her major-domo. "He who so unduly insulted him will be at his mercy if he makes himself known immediately; otherwise I will have him found out and hanged by the provost."

Hearing this, the page who had attended the lady during her promenade stepped forward.

"Madame," said Jacques, "at my request pray pardon him, since to him I owe the felicity of seeing you, the favour of supping in your company, and perhaps that of getting my father re-established in the office to which it pleased your glorious father to appoint him."

"Well said," replied the Regent. "D'Estonville," said

she, turning towards the page, "I give thee command of a company of archers. But for the future do not throw things out of the window."

Then she, delighted with De Beaune, offered him her hand, and led him most gallantly into her room, where they conversed freely together while supper was being prepared. There the Sieur Jacques did not fail to exhibit his talents, justify his father, and raise himself in the estimation of the lady, who, as is well known, was like her father in disposition, and did everything at random. Jacques de Beaune thought to himself that it would be rather difficult for him to remain all night with the Regent. Such matters are not so easily arranged as the amours of cats, who have always a convenient refuge upon the housetops for their moments of dalliance. So he rejoiced that he was known to the Regent without being compelled to fulfil his rash promise, since for this to be carried out it was necessary that the servants and others should be out of the way, and her reputation safe. Nevertheless, suspecting the powers of intrigue of the good lady, at times he would ask himself if he were equal to the task. But beneath the surface of conversation the same thing was in the mind of the Regent, who had already managed affairs quite as difficult, and she began most cleverly to arrange the means. She sent for one of the secretaries, an adept in all arts necessary for the perfect government of a kingdom, and ordered him to give her secretly a false message during supper. Then came the repast, which the lady did not touch, since her heart had swollen like a sponge and so diminished her stomach, for she kept thinking of this handsome and desirable man, having no appetite save for him. Jacques did not fail to make a good meal for many reasons. The messenger came, Madame began to storm, to knit her brows after the manner of the late king, and to say, "Is there never to be peace in this land?" Then she arose and strode about the room. "Ho there! my horse! Where is Monsieur de Vieilleville,

my squire? Ah, he is in Picardy. D'Estonville, you will rejoin me with my household at the Château d'Amboise. . . ." And looking at Jacques, she said, "You shall be my squire, Sieur de Beaune. You wish to serve the State. The occasion is a good one. Pasques Dieu! come. There are rebels to subdue, and faithful knights are needed."

In less time than an old beggar would have taken to say thank you, the horses were bridled, saddled, and ready. Madame was on her mare, and the Tourainian at her side, galloping at full speed to her castle of Amboise, followed by the men-at-arms. To be brief and come to the facts without further commentary, De Beaune was lodged not twenty yards from Madame, far from prying eyes. The courtiers and the household, much astonished, ran about inquiring from what quarter the danger might be expected; but our hero, taken at his word, knew well enough where to find it. The virtue of the Regent, well known in the kingdom, saved her from suspicion, since she was supposed to be as impregnable as the Château de Péronne. At curfew, when everything was shut, both ears and eyes, and the castle silent, Madame de Beaujeu sent away her handmaid and called for her squire. The squire came. Then the lady and the adventurer sat side by side upon a velvet couch, in the shadow of a lofty fireplace, and the curious Regent, with a tender voice, asked of Jacques: "Are you not bruised? It was very wrong of me to make a knight, wounded by one of my servants, ride twelve miles. I was so anxious about it that I would not go to bed without having seen you. Do you suffer?"

"I suffer with impatience," said he of the dozen, thinking it would not do to appear reluctant. "I see well," continued he, "my noble and beautiful mistress, that your servant has found favour in your sight."

"There, there," replied she, "did you not tell a story when you said——"

"What?" said he.

"Why, that you had followed me dozens of times to churches and other places to which I went."

"Certainly," said he.

"I am astonished," replied the Regent, "never to have seen until to-day a noble youth whose courage is so apparent in his countenance. I am not ashamed of that which you heard me say when I believed you dead. You are agreeable to me, and you wish to do well."

Then the hour of the dreaded sacrifice having struck, Jacques fell at the knees of the Regent, kissed her feet, her hands, and everything, it is said; and while kissing her, previous to retirement, proved by many arguments to the aged virtue of his sovereign, that a lady bearing the burden of the State had a perfect right to enjoy herself—a theory which was not directly admitted by the Regent, who determined to be forced, in order to throw the burden of the sin upon her lover. This notwithstanding, you may be sure she had highly perfumed and elegantly attired herself for the night, and shone with desire of embraces, for desire lent her a high colour which greatly improved her complexion; and in spite of her feeble resistance she was like a young girl, carried by assault in her royal couch, where the good lady and her young dozener conscientiously embraced each other. Then from play to quarrel, from quarrel to riot, from riot to ribaldry, from thread to needle, the Regent declared that she believed more in the virginity of the Holy Mary than in the promised dozen. Now, by chance, Jacques de Beaune did not find this great lady so very old between the sheets, since everything is metamorphosed by the light of the lamps of the night. Many women of fifty by day are twenty at midnight, as others are twenty midday and a hundred after vespers. Jacques, happier at this sight than at that of the king on a hanging day, renewed his undertaking. Madame, herself astonished, promised every assistance on her part. The manor of Azay-le-Brulé, with good title thereto, she undertook to confer upon her cavalier,

as well as the pardon of his father, if from this encounter she came forth vanquished. Then the clever fellow said to himself: "This is to save my father from punishment! this for the fief! this for the letting and selling! this for the forest of Azay! item for the right of fishing! another for the isles of the Indre! this for the meadows! I may as well release from confiscation our land of La Carte, so dearly bought by my father! Once more for a place at court! Arriving without hindrance at this point, he believed his dignity involved, and fancied having France under him; it was a question of the honour of the Crown. In short, at the cost of a vow which he had made to his patron Monsieur Saint Jacques, to build him a chapel at Azay, he presented his liege homage to the Regent in eleven clear, clean, limpid, and genuine periphrases. Concerning the epilogue of this slow conversation, the Tourainian had the great self-confidence to wish excellently to regale the Regent, keeping for her on her waking the salute of an honest man, as it was necessary for the lord of Azay to thank his sovereign, which was wisely thought. But when nature is oppressed she acts like a spirited horse, lies down, and will die under the whip sooner than move until it pleases her to rise reinvigorated. Thus, when in the morning the seignior of the castle of Azay desired to salute the daughter of King Louis XI, he was constrained, in spite of his courtesy, to make the salute as royal salutes should be made—with blank cartridge only. Therefore the Regent, after getting up, and while she was breakfasting with Jacques, who called himself the legitimate lord of Azay, seized the occasion of this insufficiency to contradict her esquire, and pretended that as he had not gained his wager, he had not earned the manor.

"Ventre-Saint-Paterne! I have been near enough," said Jacques. "But, my dear lady and noble sovereign, it is not proper for either you or me to judge in this cause. The case being an allodial case, must be brought before

your council, since the fief of Azay is held from the Crown."

"Pasques Dieu!" replied the Regent, with a forced laugh. "I give you the place of the Sieur de Vieilleville in my house. Don't trouble about your father. I will give you Azay, and will place you in a royal office, if you can without injury to my honour state the case in full council; but if one word falls to the damage of my reputation as a virtuous woman, I——"

"May I be hanged," said Jacques, turning the thing into a joke, because there was a shade of anger in the face of Madame de Beaujeu.

In fact the daughter of King Louis thought more of her royalty than of the roguish dozen, which she considered as nothing, since, fancying she had had her night's amusement without loosening her purse-strings, she preferred the difficult recital of his claim to another dozen offered her by the Tourainian.

"Then, my lady," replied her good companion, "I shall certainly be your squire."

The captains, secretaries, and other persons holding office under the regency, astonished at the sudden departure of Madame de Beaujeu, learnt the cause of her anxiety, and came in haste to the castle of Amboise to discover whence proceeded the rebellion, and were in readiness to hold a council when her Majesty had arisen. She called them together, not to be suspected of having deceived them, and gave them certain falsehoods to consider, which they considered most widely. At the close of the sitting came the new squire to accompany his mistress. Seeing the councillors rising, the bold Tourainian begged them to decide a point of law which concerned both himself and the property of the Crown.

"Listen to him," said the Regent. "He speaks truly."

Then Jacques de Beaune, without being nervous at the sight of this august court, spoke as follows, or thereabouts :—

"Noble lords, I beg you, although I am about to speak to you of walnut shells, to give your attention to this case, and pardon me the trifling nature of my language. One lord was walking with another in a fruit garden, and noticed a fine walnut tree, well planted, well grown, worth looking at, worth keeping, although a little empty; a nut tree always fresh, sweet-smelling, a tree which you would not leave if you once saw it, a tree of love which seemed the tree of good and evil, forbidden by the Lord, through which were banished our mother Eve and the gentleman her husband. Now, my lords, this said walnut tree was the subject of a slight dispute between the two, and of one of those many wagers which are constantly made between friends. The younger boasted that he could throw twelve times through it a stick which he had in his hand at the time—as many people have who walk in a garden—and with each flight of the stick he would send a nut to the ground——"

"That is, I believe, the knotty point of the case," said Jacques, turning towards the Regent.

"The other wagered to the contrary," went on the pleader. "Now the first named throws his stick with such precision of aim, so gently and so well, that both derived pleasure therefrom, and by the joyous protection of the saints, who no doubt were amused spectators, with each throw there fell a nut; in fact, there fell twelve. But by chance the last of the fallen nuts was empty, and had no nourishing pulp from which could have come another nut tree had the gardener planted it. Has the man with the stick gained his wager? I have finished. Judge."

"The thing is clear enough," said Messire Adam Fumée, a Tourainian, who at that time was the keeper of the seals. "There is only one thing for the other to do."

"What is that?" said the Regent.

"To pay the wager, Madame."

"He is rather too clever," said she, tapping her squire on the cheek. "He will be hanged one of these days."

She meant this as a joke. But these words were the real horoscope of the steward, who mounted the gallows by the ladder of royal favour, through the vengeance of another old woman, and the notorious treason of a man of Ballan, his secretary, whose fortune he had made, and whose name was Prevost, and not René Gentil, as certain persons have wrongly called him. This Ganelon and bad servant gave, it is said, to Madame d'Angoulême the receipt for the money which had been given him by Jacques de Beaune, then become Baron of Samblançay, lord of La Carte and Azay, and one of the foremost men of the State. Of his two sons, one was Archbishop of Tours, the other Minister of Finance and Governor of Touraine. But this is not the subject of the present history.

Now that which concerns the present narrative is that Madame de Beaujeu, to whom the pleasure of love had come rather late in the day, well pleased with the great wisdom and knowledge of public affairs which her lover possessed, made him Lord of the Privy Purse, in which office he behaved so well, and added so much to the contents of it, that his great renown procured for him one day the handling of the revenues which he superintended and controlled most admirably, and with great profit to himself, which was but fair. The good Regent paid the bet, and handed over to her squire the manor of Azay-le-Brulé, of which the castle had long before been demolished by the first bombarders who came into Touraine, as everyone knows. For this powdery miracle, but for the intervention of the King, the said engineers would have been condemned as heretics and abettors of Satan by the ecclesiastical tribune of the chapter.

At this time there was being built with great care by Messire Bohier, Minister of Finance, the Castle of Chenon-

ceaux, which, as a curiosity and novel design, was placed right across the river Cher.

Now the Baron de Samblançay, wishing to oppose the said Bohier, determined to lay this foundation of his at the bottom of the Indre, where it still stands, the gem of this fair green valley, so solidly was it placed upon the piles. It cost Jacques de Beaune thirty thousand crowns, not counting the work done by his vassals. You may take it for granted this castle is one of the finest, prettiest, most exquisite and most elaborate castles of our sweet Touraine, and laves itself in the Indre like a princely creature, gaily decked with pavilions and lace-curtained windows, with fine weather-beaten soldiers on her vanes, turning whichever way the wind blows, as all soldiers do. But Samblançay was hanged before it was finished, and since that time no one has been found with sufficient money to complete it. Nevertheless, his master, King Francis the First, was once his guest, and the royal chamber is still shown there. When the King was going to bed, Samblançay, whom the King called " old fellow " in honour of his white hairs, hearing his royal master, to whom he was devotedly attached, remark, " Your clock has just struck twelve, old fellow," replied, " Ah, Sire, to twelve strokes of a hammer, an old one now, but years ago a good one, at this hour of the clock do I owe my lands, the money spent on this place, and the honour of being in your service."

The King wished to know what his minister meant by these strange words; and when his Majesty was getting into bed, Jacques de Beaune narrated to him the history with which you are acquainted. Now Francis the First, who was partial to these spicy stories, thought the adventure a droll one, and was the more amused thereat because at that time his mother, the Duchesse d'Angoulême, in the decline of life, was pursuing the Constable of Bourbon in order to obtain of him one of these dozens. Wicked love of a wicked woman, for therefrom proceeded the peril of the kingdom,

the capture of the King, and the death—as has been before mentioned—of poor Samblançay.

I have here endeavoured to relate how the Château d'Azay came to be built, because it is certain that thus was commenced the great fortune of that Samblançay who did so much for his natal town, which he adorned; and also spent such immense sums upon the completion of the towers of the cathedral. This lucky adventure has been handed down from father to son, from lord to lord, in the said place of Azay-le-Ridel, where the story frisks still under the curtains of the King, which have been curiously respected down to the present day. It is, therefore, the falsest of falsities which attributes the dozen of the Tourainian to a German knight, who by this deed would have secured the domains of Austria to the House of Hapsburg. The author of our days, who brought this history to light, although a learned man, has allowed himself to be deceived by certain chroniclers, since the archives of the Roman Empire make no mention of an acquisition of this kind. I am angry with him for having believed that a braguette, nourished with beer, could have been equal to the alchemical operations of the Chinonian "braguettes," so much esteemed by Rabelais. And I have to the advantage of the country, the glory of Azay, the conscience of the castle, and the renown of the House of Beaune, from which sprang the Sauves and the Noirmoutiers, re-established the facts in all their veritable, historical, and admirable beauty. Should any ladies pay a visit to the castle, there are still *dozens* to be found in the neighbourhood, but they can only be procured retail.

(II)

THE CONSCRIPT

(Translated by George Burnham Ives)

"Sometimes they saw him, by a phenomenon of vision or of locomotion, abolish space in its two elements of time and distance, one of which is intellectual and the other physical."—*Intellectual History of Louis Lambert.*

On a certain evening in the month of November, 1793, the principal people of Carentan were gathered in the salon of Madame de Dey, at whose house the assembly was held daily. Some circumstances which would not have attracted attention in a large city, but which were certain to cause a flutter in a small one, lent to this customary meeting an unusual degree of interest. Two days before, Madame de Dey had closed her door to her guests, whom she had also excused herself from receiving on the preceding day, on the pretext of an indisposition. In ordinary times, these two occurrences would have produced the same effect in Carentan that the closing of all the theatres would produce in Paris. In those days existence was to a certain extent incomplete. And in 1793 the conduct of Madame de Dey might have had the most deplorable results. The slightest venturesome proceeding almost always became a question of life or death for the nobles of that period. In order to understand the intense curiosity and the narrow-minded cunning which enlivened the Norman countenances of all those people during the evening, but especially in order that we may share the secret anxiety of Madame de Dey, it is necessary to explain the rôle that she played at Carentan. As the critical position in which she found herself at that moment was undoubtedly identical with that of many people during the Revolution, the sympathies of more than one reader will give the needed touch of colour to this narrative.

Madame de Dey, the widow of a lieutenant-general and

chevalier of the Orders, had left the court at the beginning of the emigration. As she possessed considerable property in the neighbourhood of Carentan, she had taken refuge there, hoping that the influence of the Terror would not be much felt so far from Paris. This prevision, based upon exact knowledge of the province, proved to be just. The Revolution did little devastation in Lower Normandy. Although, when Madame de Dey visited her estates formerly, she used to see only the noble families of the province, she had from policy thrown her house open to the leading *bourgeois* of the town, and to the new authorities, striving to make them proud of their conquest of her, without arousing either hatred or jealousy in their minds. Gracious and amiable, endowed with that indescribable gentleness of manner which attracts without resort to self-abasement or to entreaties, she had succeeded in winning general esteem by the most exquisite tact, the wise promptings of which had enabled her to maintain her stand on the narrow line where she could satisfy the demands of that mixed society without humiliating the self-esteem of the parvenus or offending that of her former friends.

About thirty-eight years of age, she still retained, not that fresh and buxom beauty which distinguishes the young women of Lower Normandy, but a slender and, so to speak, aristocratic beauty. Her features were small and refined, her figure slender and willowy. When she spoke, her pale face would seem to brighten and to take on life. Her great black eyes were full of suavity, but their placid and devout expression seemed to indicate that the active principle of her existence had ceased to be. Married in the flower of her youth to an old and jealous soldier, the falseness of her position in the centre of a dissipated court contributed much, no doubt, to cast a veil of serious melancholy over a face on which the charm and vivacity of love must formerly have shone bright. Constantly obliged to restrain the ingenuous impulses, the emotions of a woman, at a time

when she still feels instead of reflecting, passion had remained unsullied in the depths of her heart. So it was that her principal attraction was due to the youthful simplicity which at intervals her face betrayed, and which gave to her ideas a naïve expression of desire. Her aspect imposed respect, but there were always in her bearing and in her voice symptoms of an outreaching towards an unknown future, as in a young girl; the most insusceptible man soon found himself falling in love with her, and nevertheless retained a sort of respectful dread, inspired by her courteous manners, which were most imposing. Her soul, naturally great, and strengthened by painful struggles, seemed to be too far removed from the common herd, and men realized their limitations.

That soul necessarily demanded an exalted passion. So that Madame de Dey's affections were concentrated in a single sentiment, the sentiment of maternity. The happiness and pleasures of which her married life had been deprived, she found in her excessive love for her son. She loved him not only with the pure and profound devotion of a mother, but with the coquetry of a mistress, the jealousy of a wife. She was unhappy when separated from him, anxious during his absence, could never see enough of him, lived only in him and for him. In order to make men understand the strength of this feeling, it will suffice to add that this son was not only Madame de Dey's only child, but her last remaining relative, the only living being to whom she could attach the fears, the hopes and the joys of her life. The late Count de Dey was the last scion of his family, as she was the last heiress of hers. Thus human schemes and interests were in accord with the noblest cravings of the soul to intensify in the countess's heart a sentiment which is always strong in women. She had brought up her son only with infinite difficulty, which had made him dearer than ever to her; twenty times the doctors prophesied his death; but, trusting in her presentiments and her hopes, she had the

inexpressible joy of seeing him pass through the dangers of childhood unscathed, and of exulting in the upbuilding of his constitution in spite of the decrees of the faculty.

Thanks to constant care, her son had grown and had attained such perfect development that at twenty years of age he was considered one of the most accomplished cavaliers at Versailles. Lastly—a piece of good fortune which does not crown the efforts of all mothers—she was adored by her son; their hearts were bound together by sympathies that were fraternal. Even if they had not been connected by the decree of nature, they would have felt instinctively for each other that affection of one being for another so rarely met with in life. Appointed sub-lieutenant of dragoons at eighteen, the young man had complied with the prevailing ideas of the requirements of honour at that period, by following the princes when they emigrated.

Thus Madame de Dey, of noble birth, wealthy, and the mother of an *émigré*, was fully alive to the dangers of her painful situation. As she had no other aim than to preserve a great fortune for her son, she had renounced the happiness of accompanying him; but, when she read the harsh laws by virtue of which the Republic daily confiscated the property of the *émigrés* at Carentan, she applauded herself for her courageous act. Was she not guarding her son's treasures at the peril of her life? Then, when she learned of the shocking executions ordered by the Convention, she slept undisturbed, happy to know that her only treasure was in safety, far from all perils and all scaffolds. She took pleasure in the belief that she had adopted the best course to save all his fortunes at once. Making the concessions to this secret thought which the disasters of the time demanded, without compromising her womanly dignity or her aristocratic beliefs, she enveloped her sorrows in impenetrable mystery. She had realised the difficulties which awaited her at Carentan. To go thither and assume the first place in society—was it not equivalent to defying the scaffold

every day? But, sustained by a mother's courage, she succeeded in winning the affection of the poor by relieving all sorts of misery indiscriminately, and made herself necessary to the rich by taking the lead in their pleasures.

She received the prosecuting attorney of the Commune, the mayor, the president of the district, the public accuser, and even the judges of the Revolutionary Tribunal. The first four of these functionaries, being unmarried, paid court to her, in the hope of marrying her, whether by terrifying her by the injury which they had it in their power to do her, or by offering her their protection. The public accuser, formerly an attorney at Caen, where he had been employed by the countess, tried to win her love by conduct full of devotion and generosity. A dangerous scheme! He was the most formidable of all the suitors. He alone was thoroughly acquainted with the condition of his former client's large fortune. His passion was inevitably intensified by all the cravings of an avarice which rested upon almost unlimited power, upon the right of life or death throughout the district. This man, who was still young, displayed so much nobility in his behaviour that Madame de Dey had been unable as yet to make up her mind concerning him. But, scorning the danger that lay in a contest of wits with Normans, she employed the inventive genius and the cunning which nature has allotted to woman, to play those rivals against one another. By gaining time, she hoped to arrive safe and sound at the end of her troubles. At that time, the royalists in the interior of France flattered themselves that each day would see the close of the Revolution; and that conviction was the ruin of a great many of them.

Despite these obstacles, the countess had skilfully maintained her independence down to the day when, with incomprehensible imprudence, she had conceived the idea of closing her door. The interest which she inspired was so profound and so genuine that the people who came to her house that evening were greatly distressed when they learned

that it was impossible for her to receive them; then, with the outspoken curiosity which is a part of provincial manners, they inquired concerning the misfortune, the sorrow, or the disease which had afflicted Madame de Dey. To these questions, an old housekeeper called Brigitte replied that her mistress had shut herself into her room, and would not see anybody, not even her servants. The cloistral existence, so to speak, which the people of a small town lead gives birth in them to such an unconquerable habit of analysing and commenting upon the actions of other people, that, after expressing their sympathy for Madame de Dey, without an idea whether she was really happy or unhappy, they all began to speculate upon the causes of her abrupt seclusion.

"If she were ill," said one curious individual, "she would have sent for the doctor; but the doctor was at my house all day, playing chess. He said with a laugh that in these days there is but one disease, and that is unfortunately incurable."

This jest was put forward apologetically. Thereupon, men, women, old men and maidens began to search the vast field of conjecture. Everyone fancied that he caught a glimpse of a secret, and that secret engrossed the imaginations of them all. The next day the suspicions became embittered. As life in a small town is open to all, the women were the first to learn that Brigitte had laid in more supplies than usual at the market. That fact could not be denied. Brigitte had been seen in the morning, in the square, and—a most extraordinary thing—she had bought the only hare that was offered for sale. Now the whole town knew that Madame de Dey did not like game. The hare became the starting-point for endless suppositions. When taking their daily walk, old men observed in the countess's house a sort of concentrated activity which was made manifest by the very precautions which the servants took to conceal it. The valet was seen beating a rug in the garden; on the

day before, no one would have paid any heed to it; but that rug became a link in the chain of evidence to support the romances which everybody was engaged in constructing. Every person had his own.

On the second day, when they learned that Madame de Dey proclaimed that she was indisposed, the principal persons of Carentan met in the evening at the house of the mayor's brother, an ex-merchant, a married man, of upright character and generally esteemed, and for whom the countess entertained a high regard. There all the aspirants to the rich widow's hand had a more or less probable story to tell; and each of them hoped to turn to his advantage the secret circumstances which forced her to compromise herself thus. The public accuser imagined a complete drama in which Madame de Dey's son was brought to her house by night. The mayor favoured the idea of a priest who had not taken the oath arriving from La Vendée and asking her for shelter; but the purchase of a hare on Friday embarrassed the mayor greatly. The president of the district was strong in his conviction that it was a leader of Chouans or of Vendeans, hotly pursued. Others suggested a nobleman escaped from one of the prisons of Paris. In short, one and all suspected the countess of being guilty of one of those acts of generosity which the laws of that day stigmatized as crimes, and which might lead to the scaffold. The public accuser said in an undertone that they must hold their tongues, and try to snatch the unfortunate woman from the abyss towards which she was rapidly precipitating herself.

"If you talk about this business," he added, "I shall be obliged to interfere, to search her house, and then——"

He did not finish his sentence, but they all understood his reticence.

The countess's sincere friends were so alarmed for her that, during the morning of the third day, the procureur-syndic of the Commune caused his wife to write her a note

to urge her to receive as usual that evening. The old merchant, being bolder, called at Madame de Dey's house in the morning. Trusting in the service which he proposed to render her, he demanded to be shown to her presence, and was thunderstruck when he saw her in the garden, engaged in cutting the last flowers from the beds, to supply her vases.

"Doubtless she has been sheltering her lover," said the old man to himself, seized with compassion for the fascinating woman.

The strange expression on the countess's face confirmed him in his suspicions. Deeply touched by that devotion so natural to a woman, and which always moves our admiration, because all men are flattered by the sacrifices which a woman makes for a man, the merchant informed the countess of the reports which were current in the town, and of the dangerous position in which she stood.

"But," he said, as he concluded, "although there are some among our officials who are not indisposed to forgive you for an act of heroism of which a priest is the object, no one will pity you if they discover that you are sacrificing yourself to the affections of the heart."

At these words Madame de Dey looked at the old man with an expression of desperation and terror which made him shudder, old man though he was.

"Come," said she, taking his hand and leading him to her bedroom, where, after making sure that they were alone, she took from her bosom a soiled and wrinkled letter. "Read," she cried, making a violent effort to pronounce the word.

She fell into her chair as if utterly overwhelmed. While the old gentleman was feeling for his spectacles and wiping them, she fastened her eyes upon him and scrutinized him for the first time with curiosity; then she said softly, in an altered voice:

"I trust you."

"Am I not sharing your crime?" replied the old man, simply.

She started; for the first time her heart found itself in sympathy with another heart in that little town. The old merchant suddenly understood both the distress and the joy of the countess. Her son had taken part in the Granville expedition; he wrote to his mother from prison, imparting to her one sad but sweet hope. Having no doubt of his success in escaping, he mentioned three days in which he might appear at her house in disguise. The fatal letter contained heartrending farewells in case he should not be at Carentan on the evening of the third day; and he begged his mother to hand a considerable sum of money to the messenger, who had undertaken to carry that letter to her through innumerable perils. The paper shook in the old man's hand.

"And this is the third day!" cried Madame de Dey, as she sprang to her feet, seized the letter, and began to pace the floor.

"You have been imprudent," said the merchant; "why did you lay in provisions?"

"Why, he may arrive almost starved, worn out with fatigue, and——"

She did not finish.

"I am sure of my brother," said the old man, "and I will go and enlist him on your side."

In this emergency the old tradesman recovered the shrewdness which he had formerly displayed in his business, and gave advice instinct with prudence and sagacity. After agreeing upon all that they were both to say and to do, the old man went about, on cleverly devised pretexts, to the principal houses of Carentan, where he announced that Madame de Dey, whom he had just seen, would receive that evening in spite of her indisposition. Pitting his shrewdness against the inborn Norman cunning, in the examination to which each family subjected him in regard

to the nature of the countess's illness, he succeeded in leading astray almost everybody who was interested in that mysterious affair. His first visit produced a marvellous effect. He stated, in the presence of a gouty old lady, that Madame de Dey had nearly died of an attack of gout in the stomach; as the famous Tronchin had once recommended her, in such a case, to place on her chest the skin of a hare, flayed alive, and to stay in bed and not move, the countess, who had been at death's door two days before, having followed scrupulously Tronchin's advice, found herself sufficiently recovered to see those who cared to call on her that evening. That fable had a prodigious success, and the Carentan doctor, a royalist in secret, added to its effect by the air of authority with which he discussed the remedy. Nevertheless, suspicion had taken too deep root in the minds of some obstinate persons, or some philosophers, to be entirely dispelled; so that, in the evening, those who were regular habitués of Madame de Dey's salon arrived there early; some in order to watch her face, others from friendly regard; and the majority were impressed by the marvellous nature of her recovery.

They found the countess seated at the corner of the huge fireplace of her salon, which was almost as modestly furnished as those of the people of Carentan; for, in order not to offend the sensitive self-esteem of her guests, she denied herself the luxury to which she had always been accustomed, and had changed nothing in her house. The floor of the reception-room was not even polished. She left old-fashioned dark tapestries on the walls, she retained the native furniture, burned tallow candles, and followed the customs of the town, espousing provincial life, and recoiling neither from the most rasping pettinesses nor the most unpleasant privations. But, realizing that her guests would forgive her for any display of splendour which aimed at their personal comfort, she neglected nothing when it was a question of affording them enjoyment; so that she always

gave them excellent dinners. She even went so far as to make a pretence at miserliness, to please those calculating minds; and after causing certain concessions in the way of luxurious living to be extorted from her, she seemed to comply with a good grace.

About seven o'clock in the evening, therefore, the best of the uninteresting society of Carentan was assembled at her house, and formed a large circle about the fireplace. The mistress of the house, sustained in her misery by the compassionate glances which the old tradesman bestowed upon her, submitted with extraordinary courage to the minute questionings, the trivial and stupid reasoning of her guests. But at every blow of the knocker at her door, and whenever she heard footsteps in the street, she concealed her emotion by raising some question of interest to the welfare of the province. She started noisy discussions concerning the quality of the season's cider, and was so well seconded by her confidant that her company almost forgot to watch her, her manner was so natural and her self-possession so imperturbable. The public accuser and one of the judges of the Revolutionary Tribunal sat silent, carefully watching every movement of her face and listening to every sound in the house, notwithstanding the uproar; and on several occasions they asked her very embarrassing questions, which, however, the countess answered with marvellous presence of mind. Mothers have such an inexhaustible store of courage! When Madame de Dey had arranged the card-tables, placed everybody at a table of boston, reversis, or whist, she remained a few moments talking with some young people, with the utmost nonchalance, playing her part like a consummate actress. She suggested a game of loto—said that she alone knew where it was, and disappeared.

"I am suffocating, my poor Brigitte!" she cried, wiping away the tears that gushed from her eyes, which gleamed with fever, anxiety and impatience. "He does not come," she continued, looking about the chamber to which she had

flown. "Here, I breathe again and I live. A few moments more and he will be here; for he still lives, I am certain; my heart tells me so! Do you hear nothing, Brigitte? Oh! I would give the rest of my life to know whether he is in prison or travelling through the country! I would like not to think——"

She looked about again to make sure that everything was in order in the room. A bright fire was burning on the hearth; the shutters were carefully closed; the furniture glistened with cleanliness; the way in which the bed was made proved that the countess had assisted Brigitte in the smallest details; and her hopes betrayed themselves in the scrupulous care which seemed to have been taken in that room, where the sweet charm of love and its most chaste caresses exhaled in the perfume of the flowers. A mother alone could have anticipated the desires of a soldier, and have arranged to fulfil them all so perfectly. A dainty meal, choice wines, clean linen, and dry shoes—in a word, all that was likely to be necessary or agreeable to a weary traveller was there set forth, so that he need lack nothing, so that the joy of home might make known to him a mother's love.

"Brigitte?" said the countess in a heartrending tone, as she placed a chair at the table, as if to give reality to her longings, to intensify the strength of her illusions.

"Oh! he will come, madame; he isn't far away. I don't doubt that he's alive and on his way here," replied Brigitte. "I put a key in the Bible and I held it on my fingers while Cottin read the Gospel of St. John; and, madame, the key didn't turn."

"Is that a sure sign?" asked the countess.

"Oh! it is certain, madame; I would wager my salvation that he is still alive. God can't make a mistake."

"Despite the danger that awaits him here, I would like right well to see him."

"Poor Monsieur Auguste!" cried Brigitte; "I suppose he is somewhere on the road, on foot!"

"And there is the church clock striking eight!" cried the countess, in dismay.

She was afraid that she had remained longer than she ought in that room, where she had faith in the life of her son because she looked upon all that meant life to him. She went downstairs; but before entering the salon, she stood a moment in the vestibule, listening to see if any sound woke the silent echoes of the town. She smiled at Brigitte's husband, who was on sentry duty, and whose eyes seemed dazed by dint of strained attention to the murmurs in the square and in the streets. She saw her son in everything and everywhere. In a moment she returned to the salon, affecting a jovial air, and began to play loto with some young girls; but from time to time she complained of feeling ill, and returned to her chair at the fireplace.

Such was the condition of persons and things in the house of Madame de Dey, while, on the road from Paris to Cherbourg, a young man dressed in a dark carmagnole, the regulation costume at that period, strode along towards Carentan. At the beginning of the conscription there was little or no discipline. The demands of the moment made it impossible for the Republic to equip all of its soldiers at once, and it was no rare thing to see the roads covered with conscripts still wearing their civilian dress. These young men marched in advance of their battalions to the halting-places, or loitered behind, for their progress was regulated by their ability to endure the fatigue of a long march.

The traveller with whom we have to do was some distance in advance of the column of conscripts on its way to Cherbourg, which the mayor of Carentan was momentarily expecting, in order to distribute lodging-tickets among them. The young man walked with a heavy but still firm step, and his bearing seemed to indicate that he had long been familiar with the hardships of military life. Although the moon was shining on the pastures about Carentan, he had

noticed some great white clouds which seemed on the point of discharging snow upon the country, and the fear of being surprised by a storm doubtless quickened his gait, which was more rapid than his weariness made comfortable. He had an almost empty knapsack on his back, and carried in his hand a boxwood cane, cut from one of the high, broad hedges formed by that shrub around most of the estates in Lower Normandy. The solitary traveller entered Carentan, whose towers, of fantastic aspect in the moonlight, had appeared to him a moment before. His steps awoke the echoes of the silent streets, where he met no one; he was obliged to ask a weaver who was still at work to point out the mayor's abode. That magistrate lived only a short distance away, and the conscript soon found himself safe under the porch of his house, where he seated himself on a stone bench, waiting for the lodging-ticket which he had asked for. But, being summoned by the mayor, he appeared before him, and was subjected to a careful examination. The soldier was a young man of attractive appearance, who apparently belonged to some family of distinction. His manner indicated noble birth, and the intelligence due to a good education was manifest in his features.

"What is your name?" the mayor asked, with a shrewd glance at him.

"Julien Jussieu," replied the conscript.

"And you come from——?" said the magistrate, with an incredulous smile.

"From Paris."

"Your comrades must be far behind?" continued the Norman in a mocking tone.

"I am three leagues ahead of the battalion."

"Doubtless some sentimental reason brings you to Carentan, citizen conscript?" queried the mayor, slyly. "It is all right," he added, imposing silence, with a wave of the hand, upon the young man, who was about to speak.

"We know where to send you. Here," he said, handing him the lodging-ticket; "here, *Citizen Jussieu.*"

There was a perceptible tinge of irony in the tone in which the magistrate uttered these last two words, as he held out a ticket upon which Madame de Dey's name was written. The young man read the address with an air of curiosity.

"He knows very well that he hasn't far to go, and when he gets outside, it won't take him long to cross the square," cried the mayor, speaking to himself, while the young man went out. "He's a bold young fellow. May God protect him! He has an answer for everything. However, if any other than I had asked to see his papers, he would have been lost!"

At that moment the clock of Carentan struck half-past nine; the torches were being lighted in Madame de Dey's ante-room, and the servants were assisting their masters and mistresses to put on their cloaks, their overcoats, and their mantles; the card-players had settled their accounts and were about to withdraw in a body, according to the usual custom in all small towns.

"It seems that the public accuser proposes to remain," said a lady, observing that that important functionary was missing when they were about to separate to seek their respective homes, after exhausting all the formulas of leave-taking.

The redoubtable magistrate was in fact alone with the countess, who waited in fear and trembling until it should please him to go.

"Citizeness," he said at length, after a long silence in which there was something horrible, "I am here to see that the laws of the Republic are observed."

Madame de Dey shuddered.

"Have you no revelations to make to me?" he demanded.

"None," she replied in amazement.

"Ah, madame!" cried the accuser, sitting down beside her and changing his tone, "at this moment, for lack of a word, either you or I may bring our heads to the scaffold. I have observed your temperament, your heart, your manners, too closely to share the error into which you have led your guests to-night. You are expecting your son, I am absolutely certain."

The countess made a gesture of denial; but she had turned pale, the muscles of her face had contracted, by virtue of the overpowering necessity to display a deceitful calmness, and the accuser's implacable eye lost none of her movements.

"Very well; receive him," continued the revolutionary magistrate; "but do not let him remain under your roof later than seven o'clock in the morning. At daybreak I shall come here armed with a denunciation which I shall procure."

She gazed at him with a stupefied air, which would have aroused the pity of a tigress.

"I shall prove," he said in a gentle tone, "the falseness of the denunciation by a thorough search, and the nature of my report will place you out of the reach of any future suspicion. I shall speak of your patriotic gifts, of your true citizenship, and we shall *all* be saved."

Madame de Dey feared a trap; she did not move, but her face was on fire and her tongue was frozen. A blow of the knocker rang through the house.

"Ah!" cried the terrified mother, falling on her knees. "Save him! save him!"

"Yes, let us save him," rejoined the public accuser, with a passionate glance at her; "let us save him though it cost *us* our lives."

"I am lost!" she cried, while the accuser courteously raised her.

"O madame!" he replied with a grand oratorical gesture, "I do not choose to owe you to anyone but yourself."

"Madame, here he——" cried Brigitte, who thought that her mistress was alone.

At sight of the public accuser, the old servant, whose face was flushed with joy, became rigid and deathly pale.

"What is it, Brigitte?" asked the magistrate, in a mild and meaning tone.

"A conscript that the mayor has sent here to lodge," replied the servant, showing the ticket.

"That is true," said the accuser, after reading the paper; "a battalion is to arrive here to-night."

And he went out.

The countess was too anxious at that moment to believe in the sincerity of her former attorney to entertain the slightest suspicion; she ran swiftly upstairs, having barely strength enough to stand upright; then she opened the door of her bedroom, saw her son, and rushed into his arms, well-nigh lifeless.

"O my son, my son!" she cried, sobbing, and covering him with frenzied kisses.

"Madame——" said the stranger.

"Oh! it isn't he!" she cried, stepping back in dismay and standing before the conscript, at whom she gazed with a haggard expression.

"Blessed Lord God, what a resemblance!" said Brigitte.

There was a moment's silence, and the stranger himself shuddered at the aspect of Madame de Dey.

"Ah, monsieur!" she said, leaning upon Brigitte's husband, and feeling then in all its force the grief of which the first pang had almost killed her; "monsieur, I cannot endure to see you any longer; allow my servants to take my place and to attend to your wants."

She went down to her own apartments, half carried by Brigitte and her old servant.

"What, madame!" cried the maid, "is that man going to sleep in Monsieur Auguste's bed, wear Monsieur Auguste's

slippers, eat the pie that I made for Monsieur Auguste? They may guillotine me, but I——"

"Brigitte!" cried Madame de Dey.

"Hold your tongue, chatterbox!" said her husband in a low voice; "do you want to kill madame?"

At that moment the conscript made a noise in his room, drawing his chair to the table.

"I will not stay here," cried Madame de Dey; "I will go to the greenhouse, where I can hear better what goes on outside during the night."

She was still wavering between fear of having lost her son and the hope of seeing him appear. The night was disquietingly silent. There was one ghastly moment for the countess, when the battalion of conscripts marched into the town, and each man repaired to his lodging. There were disappointed hopes at every footstep and every sound; then nature resumed its terrible tranquillity. Towards morning the countess was obliged to return to her room. Brigitte, who watched her mistress every moment, finding that she did not come out again, went to her room and found the countess dead.

"She probably heard the conscript dressing and walking about in Monsieur Auguste's room, singing their d——d *Marseillaise* as if he were in a stable!" cried Brigitte. "It was that which killed her!"

The countess's death was caused by a more intense emotion, and probably by some terrible vision. At the precise moment when Madame de Dey died at Carentan, her son was shot in Le Morbihan. We might add this tragic story to the mass of other observations on that sympathy which defies the law of space—documents which some few solitary scholars are collecting with scientific curiosity, and which will one day serve as basis for a new science, a science which till now has lacked only its man of genius.

(III)

INNOCENCE

By the double red crest of my fowl, and by the rose lining of my sweetheart's slipper! By all the horns of well-beloved cuckolds, and by the virtue of their blessed wives! the finest work of man is neither poetry, nor painted pictures, nor music, nor castles, nor statues, be they carved never so well, nor rowing, nor sailing galleys, but children. Understand me, children up to the age of ten years, for after that they become men or women, and cutting their wisdom teeth, are not worth what they cost: the worst are the best. Watch them playing, prettily and innocently, with slippers, above all, cancellated ones, with the household utensils, leaving that which displeases them, crying after that which pleases them, munching at the stores, and always laughing as soon as their teeth are cut, and you will agree with me that they are in every way lovable; besides which they are flower and fruit—the fruit of love, the flower of life. Before their minds have been unsettled by the disturbances of life, there is nothing in this world more blessed or more pleasant than their sayings, which are naïve beyond description. This is as true as the double chewing machine of a cow. Do not expect a man to be innocent after the manner of children, because there is an, I know not what, ingredient of reason in the naïveté of a man, while the naïveté of children is candid, immaculate, and has all the finesse of the mother, which is plainly proved in this tale.

Queen Catherine was at that time Dauphine, and to make herself welcome to the king, her father-in-law, who at that time was very ill indeed, presented him, from time to time, with Italian pictures, knowing that he liked them much, being a friend of the Sieur Raphael d'Urbin and of the Sieurs Primatice and Leonardo da Vinci, to whom he sent large sums of money. She obtained from her family—

who had the pick of these works, because at that time the Duke of Medicis governed Tuscany—a precious picture, painted by a Venetian named Titian (artist to the Emperor Charles, and in very high favour), in which there were portraits of Adam and Eve at the moment when God left them to wander about the terrestrial Paradise, and were painted their full height, in the costume of the period, in which it is difficult to make a mistake, because they were attired in their ignorance, and caparisoned with the divine grace which enveloped them—a difficult thing to execute on account of the colour, but one in which the said Sieur Titian excelled. The picture was put into the room of the poor king, who was then ill with the disease of which he eventually died. It had a great success at the Court of France, where everyone wished to see it; but no one was able to until after the king's death, since at his desire it was allowed to remain in his room as long as he lived.

One day Madame Catherine took with her to the king's room her son Francis and little Margot, who began to talk at random, as children will. Now here, now there, these children had heard this picture of Adam and Eve spoken about, and had tormented their mother to take them there. Since the two little ones at times amused the old king, Madame the Dauphine consented to their request.

"You wished to see Adam and Eve, who were our first parents; there they are," said she.

Then she left them in great astonishment before Titian's picture, and seated herself by the bedside of the king, who delighted to watch the children.

"Which of the two is Adam?" said Francis, nudging his sister Margaret's elbow.

"You silly!" replied she, "to know that, they would have to be dressed!"

This reply, which delighted the poor King and the mother, was mentioned in a letter written in Florence by Queen Catherine.

No writer having brought it to light, it will remain, like a sweet flower, in a corner of these Tales, although it is in no way droll, and there is no other moral to be drawn from it except that to hear these pretty speeches of infancy one must beget the children.

VICTOR MARIE HUGO

(1802–1885)

THE STORY OF THE BOLD PÉCOPIN

(Translated by Eleanor and the Right Hon. Augustine Birrell, K.C.)

The bold Pécopin loved the beautiful Bauldour, and the beautiful Bauldour loved the bold Pécopin. He was son to the Burgrave of Sonneck, she daughter of the Lord of Falkenburg. One owned the forest, the other the mountain. What more obvious than for the mountain and the forest to make a match? The two fathers were agreed, and Pécopin was betrothed to Bauldour. The betrothal was on an April day. The hawthorn and elder in the forest were flowering in the sunshine, a thousand charming little waterfalls—snow and rain transformed into murmuring rills, winter rudenesses into spring graces—danced melodiously among the mountains, and love, that April of man's existence, sang, sparkled, and expanded in the hearts of the lovers. Pécopin's father, an aged and valiant knight, the pride of Nahegau, died soon after the betrothal, blessing his son and commending Bauldour to him. Pécopin wept, then gradually he raised his eyes to the gentle and radiant face of his love and was comforted. When the moon rises, who dwells on the vanished sun? Pécopin had all the qualities of a man—a young man and a man of honour. Bauldour was a queen in her domain, a saint at her devotions, a nymph in the wood, a fairy at her needle. Pécopin was a mighty hunter, Bauldour an accomplished spinner. Now, between the distaff and the game-bag there is no antagonism. The spinner spins while the hunter hunts; he is absent, the distaff

diverts and consoles. The dogs bark, the spinning-wheel hums. The distant sounds of hound and horn, deep in the thicket, seem to say with a vague suggestion of a flourish, "Think of your lover." The spinning-wheel, which compels the lovely dreamer to lower her eyes, says unceasingly in a gentle yet incisive little voice, "Think of your husband." And when husband and lover are one, all goes well. Therefore wed the spinner to the hunter and fear nought. However, to say truth, Pécopin loved hunting too well. When he was on horseback, falcon on wrist, when he followed the game with his eye, when he heard the fierce baying of the crooked-legged sleuth-hounds, he was off, he flew, everything was forgotten. But it is best to be excessive in nothing. Happiness is moderation; control your tastes and bridle your appetites. Who loves horses and dogs too much offends women, who loves women too much offends the Deity. When Bauldour (and this often happened)—when Bauldour saw Pécopin mounted and ready, his horse neighing with delight, prouder than if he carried Alexander the Great in all his glory—when, I say, she saw Pécopin stroking and caressing his favourite, Bauldour was jealous of the horse. When Bauldour, this proud and noble maiden, this star of love, youth, and beauty, saw Pécopin petting his mastiff, laying his charming and manly head close to that snub nose, those great nostrils, wide ears, and dusky jaws, Bauldour was jealous of the dog. She withdrew to her own apartments, vexed and sad. Then she scolded her maids, and after her maids she scolded her dwarf, for the anger of women is like rain in the forest, it falls twice over. *Bis pluit.* At nightfall Pécopin returned, dusty and weary. Bauldour sulked and grumbled a little, with a tear in the corner of her blue eyes. But Pécopin kissed her little hand and she was silent. Pécopin kissed her lovely brow and she smiled. Bauldour's brow was white, pure, and exquisite as the ivory horn of Charlemagne. Then she retired to her turret, and he to his. She never allowed him to put his arms

around her: modesty is to woman what chivalry is to man.

* * * * * *

There was in the Sonneck hunt a clever rogue of a huntsman, free of speech and of a malicious temper, called Erlangus. This man, formerly a very skilful archer, had been wooed by many peasant girls of Lorch, but had repelled all advances and turned huntsman. Pécopin asked him the reason. Erlangus answered, "My lord, dogs have seven kinds of madness—women a thousand." Another day, hearing of the approaching marriage of his master, Erlangus came boldly to him, and said, "My lord, why do you marry?" Pécopin sent him about his business. This might have made the knight uneasy, for Erlangus had a long memory, and was cunning and full of deceit. But the truth is, the fellow went to the court of the Marquis de Lusace, where he became first huntsman, and Pécopin heard no more of him. A week before the marriage day Bauldour was spinning in the window-seat, when her dwarf announced that Pécopin was mounting the stairs. She rose from her straight-backed carved chair to run and meet him, and catching her foot in the thread of her distaff, she fell. Poor Bauldour got up unhurt, but she remembered that just such an accident had befallen the Lady Liba, and her heart sank. Pécopin entered radiant, spoke of their wedding and their happiness, and the cloud lifted from her heart.

* * * * * *

The next day Bauldour was spinning in her chamber and Pécopin was hunting in the forest. He was alone, and had only one dog with him.

Following where the chase led, he came to a farm at the entrance to the forest of Sonn, which marked the boundary of the two estates of Sonneck and Falkenburg. This farm was shaded on the east by four great trees, an ash, an elm, a fir, and an oak, which were called in the country-side "The Four Evangelists." They were magic trees. Just as

Pécopin passed beneath their shadow, four birds were perched on these four trees, a jay on the ash, a blackbird on the elm, a magpie on the fir, and a raven on the oak. The four different notes of these four feathered creatures mingled strangely, and they seemed almost to question and answer one another. The cooing of a pigeon and the clucking of a hen could be heard, though neither pigeon nor hen could be seen, because the one was in the wood and the other in the poultry-yard. A few steps farther on, an old man, all bent, was piling logs against a wall for winter use. Seeing Pécopin approach, he turned and drew himself up.

"Sir Knight," exclaimed he, "do you hear what the birds are saying?"

"Good man," replied Pécopin, "what does it matter?"

"Sir," resumed the peasant, "to the ear of the young man the jay chatters, the magpie screeches, the blackbird whistles, the raven croaks—for the old man the birds talk."

The knight burst out laughing.

"By heaven, what a fancy!"

The old man continued gravely—

"You are wrong, Sir Pécopin."

"You have never seen me, how do you know my name?"

"The birds have told it to me," said the peasant.

"You are an old madman, my good fellow," said Pécopin; and he went on his way.

About an hour afterwards, as he was crossing a glade, he heard the sound of a horn, and saw in the forest a gallant company of knights. It was the Count Palatine going a-hunting accompanied by the Burgraves who are Counts of the Castle, the Waldgraves who are Counts of the Forest, the Landgraves who are Counts of the Plain, the Rhingraves who are Counts of the Rhine, and the Raugraves who are Counts of the *Droit du Pong*. A gentleman belonging to the Pfalzgraf named Gaïrefroi caught sight of Pécopin and

hailed him, "Hullo, my fine huntsman, are you not coming with us?"

"Where are you going?" asked Pécopin.

"Fair huntsman," answered Gaïrefroi, "we go to shoot a kite at Heimburg which destroys our pheasants, we go to shoot a vulture at Vaugtsburg which exterminates our muir-fowl, we go to shoot an eagle at Rheinstein which kills our falcons. Come with us."

"When will you be back?" asked Pécopin.

"To-morrow," answered Gaïrefroi.

"I am with you," said Pécopin.

The sport lasted three days.

The first day Pécopin killed the kite, the second day Pécopin killed the vulture, the third day Pécopin killed the eagle.

The Count Palatine marvelled at so excellent a shot.

"Knight of Sonneck," said he, "I give you the fief Rhineck, adjoining my tower of Gutenfels. You will follow me to Stahleck to receive the investiture and take the oath of allegiance, in public and in the presence of the sheriffs, as provided for by the charters of the sainted Emperor Charlemagne."

To obey was unavoidable. Pécopin sent Bauldour a message in which he sadly told her that the gracious command of the Pfalzgraf obliged him to go immediately to Stahleck on a matter of great urgency.

"Be at peace, madame ma mie," he ended, "I shall be back next month."

The messenger having departed, Pécopin followed the Palatine and retired to rest with the knights of the prince's train in the lower castle ward at Bacharach. That night he had a dream. He saw again the outskirts of the forest of Sonneck, the farm, the four trees, and the four birds. The birds were not screaming, or whistling, or singing: they spoke. Their chattering, in which mingled the voices of the pigeon and the hen, seemed to shape itself into a strange

kind of dialogue, which the sleeping Pécopin could hear quite distinctly:—

THE JAY.

The pigeon away to the woods is flown.

THE BLACKBIRD.

The hen in the courtyard all alone,
Pécopin! Pécopin! sadly cries.

THE JAY.

Bauldour! Bauldour! the pigeon sighs.

THE RAVEN.

The knight fares out in the world so wide.

THE MAGPIE.

The lady is in her tower.

THE JAY.

From Aleppo or Fez will he homeward ride?

THE BLACKBIRD.

He rides from Damanhour.

Pécopin awoke in a cold sweat. At once he remembered the old man, and was terrified, without knowing why, by this dream and this dialogue. He tried to interpret his dream, and failing, fell asleep. The next morning when dawn broke, when he saw again the glorious sun, the banisher of phantoms, the disperser of dreams, he thought no more of the four trees or the four birds.

* * * * * *

Pécopin was a distinguished, highly born, witty, and handsome gentleman. Once introduced into the court of the Pfalzgraf and installed in his new fief, he pleased the Palatine so much that the worthy prince said to him one day, "Friend, I am sending an embassy to my cousin of Bur-

gundy, and I have chosen you for ambassador because of your agreeable reputation."

Pécopin had to do the bidding of his prince.

Arrived at Dijon, his eloquence distinguished him so much that one night, after having emptied three large glasses of Bacharach wine, the duke said to him—

"Sir Pécopin, you are our friend. I have some dispute with my lord, the King of France, and the Count Palatine gives me leave to send you to the king, for I have chosen you as ambassador on account of your high lineage."

He went to Paris. The king delighted in him, and taking him aside one morning—

"By the Lord, Sir Pécopin," said he, "since the Palatine has lent you to the Burgundian for the service of Burgundy, the Burgundian will surely lend you to the King of France for the service of Christendom. I need a very noble lord to make certain remonstrances on my behalf to the Miramolin of the Moors in Spain, and I have chosen you for ambassador because of your excellent wit."

One may refuse the Emperor one's vote, or the Pope one's wife, but to the King of France one may refuse nothing.

Pécopin set out for Spain. At Granada the Miramolin received him admirably well, and invited him to the Zambras of the Alhambra. Every day passed in feasting, in jousts, in racing and hunting, in all of which Pécopin took part as became a mighty champion and hunter. Notwithstanding the excellent sport provided by the Miramolin, he did not neglect the business of the King of France. As soon as the negotiations were at an end, the knight presented himself before the Sultan to take leave.

"I accept your farewell, Sir Christian," said the Miramolin, "for in truth you are about to depart immediately for Bagdad."

"For Bagdad?" cried Pécopin.

"Yes, Sir Knight," replied the Moorish prince, "for I cannot sign the treaty with the King of Paris without the

consent of the Caliph of Bagdad, who is the Commander of the Faithful. I must choose some one of great consideration to send to the Caliph, and I have chosen you because of your noble appearance."

When one is with the Moors, one does what one is told. They are dogs and infidels.

Pécopin went to Bagdad. There he had an adventure. One day when he was passing beneath the walls of the Harem, the favourite Sultana caught sight of him, and as he was handsome, sad, and haughty, she fell hopelessly in love. She sent a black female slave, who accosted the knight in the public garden of the town by the great lime tree which still flourishes there, and gave him a talisman, saying—

"This comes from a princess who loves you, and whom you will never see. Keep this talisman; so long as you wear it you will remain young. When your life is in danger, touch it and you will be safe."

Pécopin accepted the talisman, which was a fine turquoise, engraved with strange characters, and fastened it to the chain he wore about his neck.

"Now, my lord," added the slave, "note this well: whilst you wear that turquoise you will not age by one day. If you lose it you will, in one moment, age by all the accumulated years you have left behind you. Adieu, fair Giaour."

With this the negress left him. But the Caliph had seen the Sultana's slave speaking to the Christian knight.

He was a very jealous Caliph, and something of a magician. He invited Pécopin to a feast, and at nightfall took him to the top of a high tower. Pécopin incautiously went to the edge of the low parapet, and the Caliph addressed him thus: "Sir Knight, the Count Palatine sent you to the Duke of Burgundy because of your agreeable reputation, the Duke of Burgundy sent you to the King of France because of your high lineage, the King of France sent you to the Miramolin of Granada because of your excellent wit,

the Miramolin of Granada sent you to the Caliph of Bagdad because of your noble appearance, I, because of your agreeable reputation, your high lineage, your excellent wit, your noble appearance, I send you to the devil."

As he pronounced this last word the Caliph gave Pécopin a violent push, he lost his balance, and fell headlong from the top of the tower.

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When a man finds himself suddenly in the very jaws of death, a lightning flash seems to show him at once the life he is about to quit, and the death he is about to enter.

At this supreme moment Pécopin's last thought was for Bauldour. His hand went to his heart and unconsciously pressed the talisman. As his fingers touched it he felt himself supported as on wings. He no longer fell, but soared aloft. All night he flew, but at daybreak the invisible hand which supported him laid him gently down upon a solitary sea-shore.

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Now, just at this time a singular and unpleasant adventure befell the devil. The devil is used to carry off in a basket the souls that belong to him, as may be seen on the doorway of the Cathedral of Fribourg in Switzerland, where he is represented with a pig's head, a crook in his hand, and a rag-picker's basket on his back, for the evil one rakes out the wicked souls from the refuse heaps which the human race accumulates at the corner of all great earthly and divine truths. The devil got into the way of leaving his basket open, so that many souls managed to escape. Observing this, the evil one put a stout cover on his basket and a good padlock. Still, the souls, who are full of cunning, made but little of the cover, and aided by the small rosy fingers of the Cherubs, found a way of escape through the open-work of the basket. Much put out, the devil slew a dromedary, and with the skin of the hump contrived a leather sack, into which he crammed as many souls as he possibly could,

and with the help of the demon Hermes made it so secure that escape was out of the question. The devil now felt himself happier than a schoolboy with a pocketful of half-crowns. It is usually in Upper Egypt, by the shores of the Red Sea, after going his rounds among pagans and unbelievers, that the devil fills his leather bag. The place is very solitary, a stretch of sand, near a small forest of palms, between Coma, where St. Anthony was born, and Clisma, where St. Sisoës died.

One day, after the devil had had even better sport than usual, he was gaily filling his bag when, happening to turn round, he saw an angel watching him, with a smile on his face. The devil shrugged his shoulders, and went on shovelling in the souls, sorting them precious little, I dare swear, for anything is good enough for the devil's cauldron.

When he had finished he seized the bag with one hand to hoist it on to his shoulder, but he could not lift it from the ground—so full had he filled it, and so heavy it was by reason of their sins. Again he tried, this time with both hands, but the second effort was no more effective than the first: the thing would not budge an inch. "Oh, souls of lead!" said the devil; and he began to curse and to swear. Looking round, he saw the angel was laughing.

"What are you doing there?" cried the fiend.

"You can see for yourself," said the angel; "a moment ago I smiled, now I am laughing."

"Oh, celestial fowl, great simpleton, get away with you," answered Asmodeus.

But the angel grew stern, and spoke as follows—

"Dragon, hear the words I am charged to utter by the Lord of all: you will not get that load of souls to Gehenna till a saint from paradise, or a Christian fallen from the skies, has helped you to lift it from the ground and place it on your shoulder."

So saying, the angel spread his wings and flew away.

The devil was greatly irritated.

"What does that fool mean?" he muttered between his teeth; "'a saint from paradise, or a Christian fallen from the skies'? I may stop here long enough if I am to wait for such assistance as that. Why the deuce did I cram the bag so full? and that ninny, who is neither flesh nor fowl, was making fun of me. Now I must wait for the saint from paradise, or the Christian who is to fall from the skies—what a silly business: they seem easily amused up there."

While he uttered these words the inhabitants of Coma and Clisma thought they heard distant thunder. It was the devil grumbling.

To a carter who has stuck in the mud it is some relief to swear, but to get out of the rut is still better. The poor devil was hammering his brains.

It so happens that four saints, famous for their close friendship—St. Nil the Solitary, St. Autremoine, St. John the Dwarf, and St. Medard—had chosen this very day for a stroll on the shores of the Red Sea. Talking as they went, they approached the palm wood without noticing the devil, who at once assumed the shape of a poverty-stricken and infirm old man, and began to utter loud lamentations. The saints drew nearer.

"What is the matter?" said St. Nil.

"Alas, alas! my noble lords," cried the devil, "help me, I beseech you. I have a very wicked master; I am a poor slave; my wicked master is a merchant of Fez. Now you know that all the inhabitants of Fez, the Moors, Numidians, Garamantes, and all the people of Barbary, Nubia, and Egypt are wicked, perverse, rash, and pitiless, under the influence of the planet Mars. What is more, my master is grievously tormented by the spleen, causing a cold and bitter melancholy, which makes a coward of him though he is fertile in evil inventions. This reacts upon us, poor slaves—upon me, unhappy old man that I am."

"What is your drift, my friend?" said St. Autremoine.

"This, my good lord," replied the fiend: "my master is

a great traveller. He is full of hobbies. In every country he goes to he has a fancy to build up a mountain of sand in his garden, brought from the shores of the seas near which this wicked man establishes himself. In Zealand he has erected a mound of black and muddy sand, in Friesland——"

"Devil take you," interrupted St. Nil, who was a bit impetuous, "come to the point; you have wasted a quarter of an hour telling us all these cock-and-bull stories: I count the minutes."

The devil bowed humbly. "You count the minutes, my lord; that shows a noble taste. You must be from the South, for Southerns are more ingenious and given to mathematics, because they are nearer than other men to the zone of the falling stars."

Then suddenly bursting into tears, and beating his breast: "Alas! alas! my noble princes, I have a very cruel master. To build his sand mountains he forces me to come every day, an aged man like me, to fill this sack on the sea-shore. I have to carry it on my shoulder. When I have made one journey I must begin all over again, and this lasts from dawn till sunset. If I want to rest, if I want to sleep, if I succumb to fatigue, if the sack is not full, I am beaten. Alas! I am very wretched and full of infirmities. Yesterday I made six journeys; when evening came I was so weary that I could not hoist the sack I had just filled on to my shoulder, and I spent all night here weeping and terrified of the anger of my master. My lords, my good lords, have pity! Help me to raise this sack to my shoulder that I may return to my master, for if I delay much longer he will kill me."

St. Nil, St. Autremoine, and St. John the Dwarf were moved, and St. Medard began to weep, which caused a rainfall of forty days upon the earth.

But St. Nil said to the fiend—

"I cannot help thee, my friend, and I am sorry for it, but I should have to touch the sack, which is a dead thing,

and Holy Writ forbids us to touch dead things under penalty of being defiled."

St. Autremoine said to the fiend—

"I cannot help thee, my friend, and I am sorry for it, but I consider it would be a good work, and good works are a source of vanity to those who do them. I abstain from doing any, in order to preserve my humility."

St. John the Dwarf said to the fiend—

"I cannot help thee, my friend, and I am sorry for it, but, as you see, I am so small I could not reach to your girdle. How then should I raise the burden to thy shoulder?"

St. Medard, bathed in tears, said to the fiend—

"I cannot help thee, my friend, and I am sorry for it, but I am really so overcome with emotion that my arms have lost all power."

And they went on their way.

The devil was beside himself with rage.

"There are beasts for you!" cried he, watching the saints walk away. "What old pedants! How absurd they look with their long beards. Upon my word, they are even greater fools than the angels."

When an ordinary mortal is in a rage with anybody, he has the satisfaction, such as it is, of wishing him at the devil, but the devil himself is denied this solace. As he was fuming, with his eyes (full of fire and fury) fixed upon the sky, he saw a black speck in the clouds. The speck grew larger, the speck came nearer; the devil saw it was a man, a knight armed cap-a-pie, a Christian with the Red Cross upon his breast, who was falling from the sky. "Never-mind-who be praised!" cried the devil, jumping with joy, "I am saved! Here comes my Christian. I couldn't get the better of the four saints, but it will be the deuce if I can't get the better of a sinner."

As the devil spoke, Pécopin was gently laid upon the shore and sprang to his feet; then catching sight of this aged

man, resting slave-like beside his burden, he walked towards him and asked, "Who are you, friend, and where am I?"

The devil whined out piteously—

"You are on the shores of the Red Sea, my lord, and I am the most unhappy of the unhappy," and he went through the long rigmarole he had before recited to the saints, ending by beseeching the knight to help him hoist the sack on to his back. Pécopin shook his head.

"My good man, that is a most improbable tale."

"Fair sir, who drop from the clouds," answered the devil, "yours is still more improbable, and yet it is true."

"That is undoubtedly the case," said Pécopin.

"And then," pursued the fiend, "what am I to do? If my misfortunes do not sound well, is that my fault? I am as poor in wit as I am in estate, and do not know how to draw the long-bow. My lamentations must needs tally with my adventures, and I cannot put anything but the truth into my story; as the stock is, so must the soup be."

"That I admit," said Pécopin.

"And if you come to that," continued the fiend, "what harm can it do a young athlete like yourself to help a poor, infirm old fellow like me to fasten this sack between his shoulders?"

This argument seemed to Pécopin conclusive. He stooped, lifted the sack from the ground, and prepared to place it on the back of the aged man, who stood bent before him ready to receive it.

The devil is ruined by his vices. He is greedy. At this critical moment the idea occurred to him to add Pécopin's soul to the collection he was about to carry off; but it was first necessary to take Pécopin's life. To accomplish this he set himself in a low voice, and in words of obscure import, to summon an invisible and familiar spirit.

Everybody knows that when the devil converses with other fiends he uses a jargon, half Italian and half Spanish, with here and there a few words of Latin. This has been

proved and clearly established in several cases; and more especially in the trial of Doctor Eugenio Farraloa, which began at Valladolid on 10th January, 1526, and was brought to a very proper conclusion on the 6th May, 1531 by the auto da fé of the said doctor. Therefore, when at the very moment he was fastening the sack on the bowed shoulders of the little old man Pécopin heard him murmur these words, "Bamos, non sierra, occhi, verbera, frappa, y echa la piedra," it was a revelation. A sudden suspicion made him look up, and at a great height above him he saw an enormous stone held suspended over his head by some invisible giant. With the rapidity of the whirlwind, which in the space of a moment sweeps past, flies, turns, lightens, thunders, and strikes, Pécopin threw himself back, and touching his talisman with his left hand, with his right seized his dagger and ripped open the sack from end to end. The devil gave a loud cry. The released souls fled by the way of escape which Pécopin's dagger had made for them, leaving behind in the sack their foul sins and heinous crimes, a hideous heap, which, by the force of attraction natural to the fiend, incrusted itself between his shoulders like a monstrous wen, and remained for ever fixed. It is from that day that Asmodeus is humpbacked.

At the moment when Pécopin threw himself back, the invisible giant let go his stone, which fell on the devil's foot and crushed it. It is from that day that Asmodeus is lame.

The demon, like the gods, commands the thunder, but it is of an inferior quality. Pécopin felt the sea-shore tremble beneath him, a black smoke blinded him, he was deafened by a terrific noise; he fell, and was conscious of being whirled along like a dead leaf by the wind. Then he fainted.

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For many a long day Pécopin wandered over the face of the earth. To describe his journeys would be to write a

gazetteer. He travelled barefoot and in sandals, rode on the back of every beast that can be ridden—asses and wild asses, horses, mules, camels, zebras, and elephants. He sailed in every kind of ship, on every kind of voyage. The merchantmen of the high seas, the narrow craft of the Mediterranean, *oneraria et remigia*, galley and galleon, frigate and frigatoon, felucca, polacca, barque, barquette, and barge. He risked his life in the birch canoes of the Indians, and in the leathern coracles of the Euphrates, about which Herodotus has something to say; he was buffeted by every wind of heaven, the sirocco of the Levant and the sirocco of the Mezzogiorno, the tramontane and the mistral; he wandered over Persia, Peru, Bramaz, Tagatai, Transiane, Sagistan, l'Hasubi. He saw the Manomatapa as did Vincent le Blanc, Sofala like Pedro Ordoñez, Ormuz like the Lord of Tines, savages as did Acosta, and giants as did Malherbe de Vitré. He lost in the desert four toes from his foot, like Jerome Costilla. Seventeen times was he sold into slavery, like Mendez-Pinto. He had every fever under the sun; the scurvy which was the terror of Avicenne, and sea-sickness, which Cicero thought worse than death. He climbed mountains of so tremendous a height that on the top he vomited blood. He landed on that island which has never yet been discovered by anyone that looked for it, and he verified the fact that its inhabitants are good Christians.

In Midelpalic, which is in the far, far North, he observed a castle where no castle was; but so marvellous are the fascinations of the North that this caused him no surprise. He lived for months with the King of Mogor Ekebas, and was made much of by that potentate, about whose court he could have told you more than has ever since been written by Englishman, Dutchman, or even by the Jesuit Fathers. He became learned; for was he not taught by the two master-teachers of all knowledge, travel, and misfortune? He studied the fauna and flora of every climate. He recorded the winds by the migrations of birds, and the

currents by the movements of the cephalopodes. He saw pass him, in submarine regions, the *Ommastrephes sagittatus* going to the North Pole, and the *Ommastrephes giganteus* going to the South Pole. He saw men and monsters even as did the ancient Greek Ulysses. He saw all the strange creatures of the earth—the rosmar, the black rail, the solan goose, the rushtails of the island of Comore, the capercailzies of Scotland, the antenales that fly in flocks, the alcatrazes big as geese, the moraxos bigger than the tiburons, the peymores of the Maldive Islands, who eat men, the fish manare which has the head of an ox, the bird claki, who is begotten of rotten wood, the little saru which has a sweeter note than the parrot, and lastly the boranet, the animal-plant of Tartary, which is rooted in the earth and browses on the grass around it. He killed a sea triton of the species yapiaria, and a river triton of the species baëpapina fell in love with him. One day, in the island of Manar, two hundred leagues from Goa, some fishermen showed him seven mermen and nine sirens, whom they had caught in their nets. He heard the nocturnal hammering of the blacksmith of the sea, and he ate of the one hundred and fifty-three different sorts of fish which the Apostles caught when they cast their nets at the bidding of our Lord. In Scythia he captured a gryphon, on which the Arimaspian people made war for the sake of the gold which he guards. These folk wished to make Pécopin their king, but he managed to escape them. Afterwards he was as nearly as possible shipwrecked off Cape Gardefù, which the ancients called *Promontorium aromatorum;* and all the while, in the midst of all these adventures, wanderings, toils, deeds of daring, luckless chances, this brave and faithful knight had but one object in view—to get back to Germany; but one hope—to be once more at Falkenburg; but one thought —to see Bauldour again.

Thanks to the talisman of the Sultana, which never left him, he could neither age nor die. Nevertheless he sorrowfully marked the flight of time. When at length he reached

the north of France, five years had passed since he saw Bauldour. Sometimes he brooded over this when night came and he had been tramping since dawn. Then he would sit down on a stone by the roadside and weep. But ere long he forced himself to take courage once more.

"Five years," he said to himself; "yes, but I shall soon see her now. She was fifteen when we parted, now she is twenty; what of that?"

His garments were in rags, his shoes in holes, his feet bleeding; but joy and strength revived, and he set forth on his way again. After this fashion he reached the Vosges Mountains.

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Pécopin had wandered all day among the rocks vainly seeking a way down to the Rhine, and towards nightfall he reached the edge of a wood of fir, ash, and maple. Moodily he plunged into it, and after walking more than an hour, the path he was following suddenly led him into a glade of holly, juniper, and wild raspberry. Close by was a miasma-breathing marsh. Worn out by fatigue, exhausted with hunger and thirst, he looked eagerly about him in hopes of seeing a cottage, a charcoal-burner's hut, or even a herdsman's fire, when all at once a flock of sheldrake flew by screaming and clapping their wings. Pécopin started at the sight of these strange birds, which make their nests underground and are called *canards-lapins* by the simple peasants of the Vosges. He held aside the holly bushes and saw that the turf was everywhere thickly sprinkled with the blossoms of the samphire, angelica, hellebore, and the greater gentian. He stooped and picked up a shell; it was one of those Valogne mussels which hold pearls as big as peas. Looking up, he saw a great horned owl hovering above his head. Pécopin felt uneasy; the cabalistic herbs, the mussel, the sheldrake, the horned owl—all were disquieting, and he began in alarm to wonder where he could possibly have wandered to, when he heard a distant song. A voice,

hoarse and cracked, muffled and yet shrill, sang the following ditty:—

Deep in my little lake that lies
Beneath the shadows cool,
Fair Tethys of the laughing eyes
And swarthy Ocean rule—
Deep in the pool on the mountains lone,
By mortal steps untried,
The great King Ocean has his throne,
With Tethys at his side.
I am the Dwarf, hark while I sing,
Sire of the Giants tall—
Tell of the two great seas that spring
Out of my pool so small.

See from the mountain's rocky crown,
Where never bird has soared,
There steals for her a blue stream down—
A green stream for her lord.
See from my grotto in the snows,
Where never fire was seen,
Ever a green stream for him flows—
A blue stream for his queen.
I am the Dwarf, hark while I sing,
Sire of the Giants tall—
Tell of the two great seas that spring
Out of my pool so small.

I have an emerald buried there,
In the yellow sand it lies,
In my humble casket a sapphire rare,
Safe hid from mortal eyes:
My emerald melts, and thence each day
The great Rhine has its birth,
And from my sapphire leaps alway
The lovely Rhone to earth.
I am the Dwarf, hark while I sing,
Sire of the Giants tall—
Tell of the two great seas that spring
Out of my pool so small.

There was no longer any possible doubt; poor exhausted traveller that he was, Pécopin had strayed into the fatal "Forest of Lost Steps." In this great forest full of labyrinths and mazes the dwarf Roulon wanders to and fro. Roulon dwells in a lake in the Vosges, on one of the highest of the mountain summits, and, because from this lake one small

streamlet finds its way to the Rhine and another to the Rhone, this braggart dwarf calls himself the Father of the German Ocean and of the Mediterranean. His delight is to roam about the forest, and to make travellers lose their way. He who enters the forest of Lost Steps never finds his way out. The voice and the song were those of Roulon. Pécopin threw himself on the ground in despair and hid his face. "Alas!" he cried, "it is all over. I shall never see Bauldour more."

"Indeed you will," said a voice at his elbow.

Pécopin started up. An old gentleman, clad in a magnificent hunting suit, was standing close by him. His equipment was complete in every detail. A hunting knife, with a handle of chased gold, hung at his side, and from his belt was slung a buffalo horn, curiously inlaid. There was something weird and vaguely luminous in his pale, smiling countenance, as revealed by the glimmer of the fading twilight. The sudden apparition of an old huntsman in such a place, and at such an hour, was certainly strange, but in the forest of Lost Steps no one thinks of anything except Roulon. The old man was not a dwarf—that was enough for Pécopin. Moreover, he had a gracious, easy, and attractive appearance, and though in full hunting trim, he was so old, so worn, so bent, had such wrinkled and feeble hands, such white eyebrows and shrunken limbs, that it would have been shameful to be afraid of him.

"What do you want with me?" asked Pécopin.

"To restore you to Bauldour," answered the old man, smiling still.

"When?"

"Spend only one night in hunting with me."

"What night?"

"The one now beginning."

"And I shall see Bauldour again?"

"When the hunt is finished, at sunrise, I will leave you at the door of Falkenburg."

"Hunt by night?"

"Why not?"

"It is unusual."

"Bah!"

"It is very fatiguing."

"Not at all."

"But you are very old."

"Do not worry yourself about me."

"But I am tired, I have tramped all day; I am half dead with hunger and thirst," said Pécopin. "I could not even sit a horse."

The hunter loosed from his belt a silver-embossed gourd and gave it to Pécopin.

"Drink this."

Pécopin put his lips to the gourd, and had swallowed but a mouthful when he felt himself restored—he was young, strong, alert, full of power—he had slept, he had eaten, he had drunk, indeed now and again it almost seemed as if he had drunk too much.

"Come," he cried, "let us walk, run, hunt all night; I am ready and willing. But I shall see Bauldour again?"

"At sunrise."

"And what guarantee do you give me?"

"My presence here, the succour I bring you. I might have left you to die here of hunger, fatigue, and misery; I might have abandoned you to the Dwarf of the Lake, but I had compassion on you."

"I will follow you," said Pécopin, "it is a bargain—Falkenburg at sunrise."

"Hola, you over there," called the old lord, raising his feeble voice to the uttermost, and turning his back towards Pécopin. Pécopin saw he was humpbacked; he walked a few paces, and Pécopin saw he was lame. A band of cavaliers, dressed like princes and mounted like kings, emerged from the depths of the wood at the call of the old huntsman. He appeared to be their master, and they

ranged themselves round him in profound silence. All carried knives or boar spears; he alone had a horn. It was now night, but two hundred linkmen, each carrying a torch, accompanied the cavaliers.

"Ebbene," said the master, "ubi sunt los perros?"

This mixture of Italian, Latin, and Spanish impressed Pécopin disagreeably, but the old man continued to call impatiently—

"The dogs, the dogs."

He had scarcely finished speaking when a terrific barking re-echoed through the glade, and at the same moment a pack of hounds came in sight—an incomparable pack—a pack fit for an emperor. Whippers-in with yellow coats and scarlet stockings, ferocious-looking kennel men and naked negroes, held them firmly in leash. Never was council of dogs more complete. There were there all imaginable dogs, coupled and divided into groups according to instinct and breed. The first group consisted of a hundred English bulldogs and a hundred greyhounds in leash.

The second group was entirely composed of Barbary dogs, used for herding cattle, and not to be frightened by any sound that can be heard.

The third group was a legion of Norwegian hounds, tawny, inclining to red, with a white patch on the forehead or neck, keen of scent and of high courage, and specially delighting in the stag-hunt.

There was not a single mongrel amongst all these.

The fourth group was striking. It was a tumultuous, dense crowd of the powerful black mastiffs of the Abbey of St. Aubert-in-Ardennes, which, though short-legged and somewhat slow, breed formidable sleuth-hounds, and hunt the wild boar with ferocity.

The fifth group was Eastern, and must have cost enormous sums, for it was composed only of dogs of Palimbotra, the natural foes of the wild bull, dogs of Cinliqui, who pull down the lion, and dogs of Monomotapa, who form part

of the guard of the Great Mogul. All of them, from whatever part of the world they came, whether from England, Barbary, Norway, the Ardennes or Hindostan, howled outrageously. A parliament of men could not have made more noise. Pécopin was dazzled by this pack. All his hunting instincts revived, and yet there was something mysterious in the manner of its arrival on the scene, and it struck him as odd that until he actually saw the dogs he should not have heard them.

The whipper-in who led all this hunting train was a few feet from Pécopin, with his back towards him. Pécopin put his hand on the man's shoulder to ask him a question. He turned; the whipper-in was masked. Pécopin was struck dumb, and was beginning to ask himself very seriously whether he was wise to join such a hunt as this, when the old lord addressed him.

"Well, Sir Knight, what think you of our dogs?"

"I think that extraordinary horses will be required to follow such terrific dogs."

Without answering, the huntsman put a silver whistle to his lips. A trampling was immediately heard among the trees, the bystanders drew to one side, and four grooms in scarlet liveries appeared leading two magnificent horses.

One was a Spanish jennet of wonderful symmetry, with smooth, blackish, well-hollowed hoofs, the pasterns short, the forelegs muscular and nervous, the knees lean and firmly set in their sockets, the chest broad and well developed.

The other was a Tartar racer, very broad in the hind quarters, long in the body, and smooth in the flanks. His finely arched neck was clothed with a thick, crisp mane, his great tail swept the ground, the eyes were brilliant, mouth large, ears restless, nostrils wide; he was seven years old, and his mettle at its highest. The first had armour on the forehead and chest, and a war saddle; the second was less proudly but more magnificently caparisoned. He had a

silver bit, a bridle worked in gold, a regal saddle, a brocaded saddle-cloth, and a waving plume.

The one stamped, foamed, snorted, champed the bit, and seemed to ask for war. The other glanced here and there as if demanding admiration, neighed light-heartedly, seemed scarcely to rest on the ground, and gave himself royal airs. Both were black as ebony. Pécopin, lost in admiration, feasted his eyes on these superb beasts.

"Well," said the old lord, limping and coughing, but smiling still. "Which do you choose?"

Pécopin's indecision vanished: he jumped upon the jennet.

"Are you ready?" asked the old hunter.

"Yes," answered Pécopin.

Then the old man burst into loud laughter, with one hand tore off the plume, the saddle, and the trappings of the Tartar horse, seized his mane with the other, and bounded with a tiger-like leap on to the bare back of the splendid animal, which was trembling in every limb. Then, seizing his horn, he blew such a formidable blast, that Pécopin, half deafened, thought this hunter must carry thunder in his bosom.

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At the sound of the horn the forest was illuminated to its innermost depths by a thousand strange and glimmering lights, shadows flitted to and fro, and distant voices cried, "En chasse." The pack bayed, the horses snorted, and the trees rustled as if swept by a high wind. At the same moment a cracked bell tolled midnight bleatingly from out of the darkness. As the twelfth stroke died away the old lord blew a second blast upon his ivory horn, and thereupon the huntsmen let loose the dogs, which flew like so many stones hurled from a catapult. The clamour broke forth louder than ever, and re-echoed through the forest, and the whole hunt, the old lord and Pécopin at its head, started off at full speed. It was indeed a fearful, unearthly gallop,

headlong and violent beyond all words. Pécopin was carried out of himself, dazed as by lightning, intoxicated as by the fumes of wine, maddened as by the strife of battle. The hoofs of his horse struck fire as they flashed through the forest, and seemed to ring in his brain as if his head were the road down which they tore. The forest was huge, the hunters countless, glade followed upon glade, the wind howled, the bushes shivered; the dogs bayed, the outline of a gigantic stag of sixteen antlers was now and again visible through the branches, and then was lost among the glimmering lights and shadows; the trees bowed themselves forward as if gazing fearfully upon the hunt and drew back after it had passed them. Dominating all other sounds, the horn of the old hunter was heard in the distance.

Pécopin could not tell where he was. He passed a ruin, half hidden by fir trees, in the midst of which a waterfall leapt down a great rock of porphyry; he thought he recognized the Castle of Nideck. Then on his left hand flew past him what appeared to be the Lower Vosges; he noted in succession the outline of their four summits, the Bau-de-la-Roche, the Champ-du-Feu, the Climont, and the Ungersberg. A moment later he was in the Upper Vosges. In less than a quarter of an hour his horse had traversed the Giromagny, the Rotabac, the Tultz, the Barenkopf, the Graisson, the Bressoir, the Haut-de-Houce, the Mont de Lure, the Tête-de-l'Ours, the great Donon, and the great Ventron. These huge peaks appeared to him confusedly amidst the darkness, without sequence or link; it seemed as if a giant, in sport, had overthrown the vast mountain range of Alsace.

Now he fancied he saw beneath him the lakes which the Vosges carry on their summits, as if these mountains were flying beneath the belly of his horse. It was thus he caught sight of his shadow reflected in the Bains-des-Païens and in the Saut-des-Cuves, in the Lac Blanc and the Lac Noir. But he saw it as the swallows see theirs when they skim the

mirrored surface of a pool—vanishing as soon as seen. Still, wild and desperate as the ride was, he took courage from touching his talisman, and reflecting that after all he was not leaving the Rhine.

All at once he was plunged in a thick mist, through which at first the trees loomed faintly, and then were blotted out altogether. The noise of the hunt was redoubled in this gloom, and the Spanish jennet galloped with renewed fury. The fog was so thick that Pécopin could scarcely see his horse's ears.

In such terrible straits it must be a great effort, and assuredly is a great merit, to rest your soul on God and your heart upon your mistress, as did the brave knight. He was thinking of God and of Bauldour—perhaps even more of Bauldour than of God—when the sighing of the wind seemed to him to become a voice, and uttered distinctly the word *Heimburg*.

Just then, by the light of a great torch carried by one of the huntsmen, Pécopin saw overhead a kite, transfixed by an arrow, but still flying. He strained his eyes to see the bird more clearly, but his horse gave a bound, the kite flapped its wings, the torch disappeared into the wood, and again he was in darkness. A few moments later the voice spoke again, and said *Vaughtsburg*.

Again a light shone through the mist, and Pécopin saw in the shadow a vulture, its wing pierced by a javelin, but still flying. He opened his eyes to see and his mouth to cry out, but before he could utter a sound, the light, the vulture, and the javelin had vanished. The horse had not slackened its pace, but plunged full tilt among these phantoms as if it had been the blind horse of the demon Paphos, or the blind horse of King Sisymordachus. A third time the wind spoke, and Pécopin heard the mournful aerial voice say *Rheinstein*.

A third flash illuminated the trees through the fog, and a third bird flew by. It was an eagle pierced by a dart.

Then Pécopin recalled the hunting party of the Pfalzgraf, in which he had been tempted to join, and he shuddered. Still, the jennet galloped so desperately, the trees and vague outlines of the nocturnal landscape flew by so rapidly, the pace was so prodigious, that even in his own mind there could be no repose. Apparitions and visions followed hard one upon another, so confusedly that he could not fix his thoughts even upon his own melancholy memories. Ideas coursed through his brain like the wind. In the distance the noise of the hunt was still heard, and the monstrous stag belled in the thicket.

Little by little the mist dispersed, the air grew suddenly milder, and the character of the vegetation changed. Cork and pistachio trees were seen among the rocks; a great white moon, ringed with a huge halo, shed a weird light over the landscape, and yet, by the almanac, there should have been no moon that night.

Galloping down a deep lane, Pécopin stooped and pulled a handful of weeds from the bank. By the light of the moon he examined them, and recognized with dismay the wound-wort of the Cevennes, the filiform veronica, and the giant fennel. Half an hour later the wind was still hotter; glimpses of the sea were ever and anon visible through the gaps of the forest. Again he stooped and plucked a handful of plants at random. This time it was the bean trefoil of Cette, the star-anemone of Nice, the crimson geranium of the Basses-Pyrenees.

It was evident that Pécopin was leaving the Rhine behind him with frightful rapidity. Between the two handfuls of leaves he had travelled more than a hundred leagues. He had crossed the Vosges, he had crossed the Cevennes, he was at this moment crossing the Pyrenees. "Sooner death," thought he, and tried to throw himself from his horse; but at the movement he made to dismount, he felt his feet gripped as if by hands of steel; he looked—his stirrups were holding him fast. They were living stirrups. Distant

shouts, neighing of horses, and barking of dogs mingled together in wild confusion. Strangely far away, preceding the hunt, was heard the sinister sound of the old hunter's horn, and between the livid, wind-shaken branches Pécopin saw the hounds swimming across pools full of magical reflections. The luckless knight resigned himself to his fate, let himself go, and closed his eyes.

Once he opened them. The furnace heat of a tropical night smote upon his cheek, vague sounds of roaring of tigers and cries of jackals reached his ears; he caught glimpses of ruined temples on the pinnacles of which were gravely poised rows of vultures and cranes. The valley was filled with fantastically grouped trees of a form strange to him. He thought he recognized the banyan and the baobab. Pécopin was in an Indian forest. Again he closed his eyes.

Soon he reopened them. In a quarter of an hour an icy blast had succeeded the fiery breath of the equator. The cold was intense, and the horse's hoofs rang sharply on the frozen ground. The mountains and woods were terribly rugged. Two or three rocks of immense height were all that could be seen on the horizon, a few gulls circling round them, and beyond, glimpses of long white waves, dashing flakes of foam towards the sky, while in return the sky showered back flakes of snow. A moment after the night grew more densely black. Pécopin could now see nothing, but he heard a frightful noise, and realized he was passing the Maelstrom, the Tartarus of the ancients, and the navel of the sea.

What was this fearful forest which encircled the whole earth? The monstrous stag reappeared at intervals, always fleeing and always pursued. The spectral sounds and shadows followed helter-skelter on his track; dominating all else, even the noise of the Maelstrom, was heard the horn of the aged huntsman. All at once the jennet stopped short, the baying of the hounds ceased, everything fell silent.

The poor knight, who for an hour past had closed his eyes, now opened them. He saw before him a gloomy and gigan-

tic building, the brilliantly lit windows of which seemed to glare like as many fiery eyes. This façade was sombre as a mask and living as a human countenance.

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What was this building? It would be difficult to say. It was a house as strong as a fortress, a fortress magnificent as a palace, a palace as threatening as a dungeon, a dungeon as silent as a grave. No voice was heard within, no shadow was seen. Around this stupendous castle the forest stretched as far as the eye could reach. There was no longer any moonlight, only a few stars on the horizon showed red as blood.

The horse had stopped at a flight of steps leading up to a great closed door. Pécopin looked right and left; he seemed dimly to distinguish along the whole length of the façade other flights of steps, before which stood immovable other knights, halting as he halted and waiting in silence as he waited. Pécopin drew his sword and was about to knock with the hilt on the marble balustrade, when the horn sounded suddenly close by the castle, powerful, sonorous, deafening, as the storm-laden clarion of the fallen angels. The horn ceased. The echo had scarcely died away when the doors of the castle opened violently outwards, as if propelled by a wind from within. A flood of light streamed out.

The jennet mounted the steps, and Pécopin entered a vast and brilliantly lit hall. The walls of this hall were hung with tapestry, representing scenes from Roman history. The space between the panels was inlaid in ivory and cypress wood. A gallery running round the hall was filled with flowers and plants. The pavement was a mosaic setting forth the story of the Trojan war. The horse, whose hoofs rang sonorously upon the marble floor, crossed this first hall deliberately, without any guidance, and entered the second chamber, equally vast, deserted, and brilliantly illuminated. Large panels of carved cedar wood adorned this room, and

within these panels some mysterious artist had inserted marvellous pictures, inlaid with gold and mother-of-pearl. There were battles, hunting scenes, festivals, jousts, naval engagements, with every sort of vessel sailing upon a sea of turquoises, emeralds, and sapphires, imitating astonishingly well the billowing of the ocean.

Beneath these pictures ran a frieze, sculptured by a master-hand, and representing in their multifarious relations to one another the three races of earth who possess intellect—giants, men, and dwarfs. Everywhere in this work the giants and dwarfs humiliated man—smaller than the giants and stupider than the dwarfs. Notwithstanding this, the ceiling seemed to offer a certain malicious homage to human intelligence. It was entirely covered with medallions, on which shone, illuminated by a dull glow, and crowned with the crown of Pluto, portraits of all the men to whom the world owes discoveries, reputed useful, and who on this account are called *Benefactors of Humanity*. Each was there in virtue of the invention he had made; Arabus for medicine, Dædalus for mazes, Pisistratus for books, Aristotle for libraries, Tubalcain for anvils, Architas for artillery, Noah for navigation, Abraham for geometry, Moses for the trumpet, Amphictyon for the interpretation of dreams, Frederick Barbarossa for falconry, and Sieur Bachon of Lyons for squaring the circle. In the angles of the arched roof were grouped, as the chief stars in this sky of human constellations, many illustrious countenances: Flavius who invented the compass, Christopher Columbus who discovered America, Botargus who concocted the most famous sauces, Mars who invented war, Faustus who discovered printing, the monk Schwartz who invented gunpowder, and the Pope Pontian who invented cardinals. Several of those personages were unknown to Pécopin for the reason that they were not yet born at the date of this story.

The knight, borne along by the sole will of his horse, made his way through a long series of magnificent halls.

In one of them he noticed on the eastern wall the following inscription in letters of gold: "The Caoué, or Cave of the Arabs, is a herb which grows abundantly in the Turkish Empire, and is called in India the miraculous herb, being prepared as follows: 'Take half an ounce of this herb, reduce it to powder, and infuse in a pint of plain water for three or four hours; then boil till a third of the liquid is consumed. Drink it very gradually, almost as if inhaling it. Well-to-do persons flavour it with sugar or ambergris.'"

Opposite, on the western wall, shone this other legend: "Greek fire is made with ashes of willow wood, salt, brandy, sulphur, pitch, incense, and camphor. It burns under water without other ingredient, and consumes all matter."

In another hall the sole decoration was a life-like portrait of that lackey who at Trimalchio's feast perambulated the table, singing in a delicate voice the praises of such sauces as are principally composed of benzoin.

Everywhere torches, lustrous candles, chandeliers reflected in enormous mirrors of burnished steel or copper, illuminated these huge and gorgeous apartments wherein Pécopin did not meet one living soul, and through which he advanced with a haggard eye and troubled in spirit, alone, uneasy, scared, full of such unutterable and confused thoughts as come to those who dream in the gloomy depths of a forest.

At last he reached a door of reddish metal, over which was seen a big golden apple, with foliage of precious stones; and on this apple were engraved these two lines—

"Adam invented dinner,
Eve invented dessert."

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As he was trying to fathom the ironical humour of this inscription, the door slowly opened and the horse entered. Pécopin was as a man who passed in a moment from the most brilliant sunshine of midday to the gloomiest recesses of a cavern. The door closed behind him, and the place

he had entered was so dark that at first he thought himself blinded: he could only discern at some distance a wan and diffused glimmer. Little by little his eyes, dazzled by the preternatural brilliancy of the apartments he had passed through, became accustomed to the darkness, and he began to distinguish, as through a veil, the thousand monstrous pillars of a prodigious Babylonian hall. The faint light in the centre of this hall took outline, shadowy forms became visible, and in a few moments the knight began to recognize, in the midst of a forest of twisted columns, a huge table, luridly lit up by seven blue flickering flames issuing from a seven-branched candlestick. At the head of the table, on a throne of green gold, sat a giant of living brass. This giant was Nimrod. Right and left of him, on chairs of iron, sat a crowd of pale and silent guests, some with Moorish head-dresses, others more richly decked with pearls than the Rajah of Bisnagar. Pécopin recognized all the famous hunters whose names live in history. The King Mithrobuzane; the tyrant Machanidas; the Roman Consul Æmilius; Barbula II; Rollo, King of the Sea; Zuentibold, the unworthy son of Arnolphus the Great, King of Lorraine; Haganon, favourite of Charles of France; Herbert, Count of Vermandois; Guillaume Tête-d'Étoupe, Count of Poitiers, founder of the illustrious house of Réchignevoisin; the Pope Vitalianus; Fardulphus, Abbot of St. Denis; Athelstane, King of England; and Aïgrold, King of Denmark. Beside Nimrod, resting on his elbow, was Cyrus, who founded the Persian Empire 2000 years before Christ, and who had his armorial bearings emblazoned on his breast.

This table was served with imperial state. At the four corners were celebrated huntresses—Queen Emma; Queen Ogive, mother of Louis d'Outremer; Queen Gerberge; and Diana, who, in her quality of goddess, had a canopy and a diadem like the three queens. None of the guests were speaking or eating. A large empty space in the midst of the table seemed to wait the repast, and upon it there was

nothing but flasks, wherein sparkled a thousand beverages from all the countries of the world. Palm-tree wine of India, rice-wine of Bengal, distilled water of Sumatra, arrack from Japan, the pamplis of the Chinese, and the pechinez of the Turks. Here and there, in capacious earthenware pitchers, richly enamelled, foamed the drink called by the Norwegians *wel*, the Goths *buska*, the Corinthians *vo*, the Sclavonians *oll*, the Poles *pwo*, and by us named *beer*. Negroes, who resembled demons, or demons who resembled negroes, stood round the table, upright, dumb, napkin under arm and ewer in hand. Each guest had, as was meet, his dwarf beside him. Madam Diana had her greyhound.

Gazing fixedly into the misty depths of this extraordinary place, Pécopin saw that in the immensity, perhaps limitless immensity, of the hall beneath the forest of pillars was a multitude of spectators, all on horseback like himself, all in hunting garb, shadows in their obscurity, spectres in their silence, statues in their immobility. Amongst the nearest of them he thought he recognized the knights who followed the old huntsman in the forest of Lost Steps. As I have said, guests, attendants, and spectators preserved a terrifying silence, and had a sound proceeded from them it would have been as startling as if the stones of a sepulchre were to speak. It was piercingly cold in this murky gloom, and Pécopin was chilled to the marrow, yet he felt the sweat pour from every limb.

All at once the baying of hounds was heard, distant at first, soon violent, joyous and savage, then the sound of the old huntsman's horn mingled with the noise of the dogs, and he began to execute, with triumphant splendour, an admirable hallali, perfectly new and strange, which, recovered centuries later by Roland de Lattré in a midnight inspiration, procured for this great musician on April 6, 1574, the honour of being created by Pope Gregory XIII Knight of St. Peter, of the Golden Spur, *de numero partici-*

pantium. At these sounds Nimrod raised his head, the Abbot Fardulphus turned half round, and Cyrus, who was leaning on his right elbow, now leaned upon his left.

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The baying of the dogs and the sound of the horn grew nearer, a large double door, opposite to that by which Pécopin had entered, opened wide, and the knight saw advancing through a long dim gallery the two hundred torch-bearers, carrying on their shoulders a gigantic dish of greenish-gold, on which lay, roasted and smoking and surrounded with an ocean of gravy, the sixteen-antlered stag. Preceding the linkmen, whose torches glowed like live coals, came the old hunter mounted on his foam-flecked Arab courser, and horn in hand. He no longer winded it, but smiled courteously, undisturbed by the persistent clamour of the pack which, still led by the masked huntsman, followed the stag. When the procession turned from the gallery into the hall, the torches burned blue and the dogs suddenly became silent.

These ferocious animals followed their master at a slow pace, with imploring eyes, drooping heads, their tails between their legs, their bodies quivering in abject terror, towards the table where the mysterious guests still sat, as pallid, unmoved, and gloomy as marble figures. The old man when he reached the table looked the lugubrious revellers full in the face and burst into a roar of laughter.

"Hombres et mugeres or ca vosostros belle signore, domini et dominae, amigos mios. How goes it?"

"You are very late," said the man of brass.

"That is because I wanted a friend to see the hunt," answered the old man.

"Yes," said Nimrod, "but look yonder," and he pointed his thumb over his brazen shoulder towards the extreme end of the hall.

Pécopin's eyes mechanically took the same direction, and discerned on the black walls some faint, arched outlines, as

if of windows, vaguely defined by the earliest glimmer of dawn.

"It is well," said the hunter, "we must make haste."

And at a sign from him the two hundred torch-bearers made ready to lay the roasted stag upon the table at the foot of the seven-branched candlestick.

Then Pécopin dug his spurs into the flanks of his jennet, which, strange to say, obeyed him, perhaps because the power of witchcraft was lessened by the approach of day. He forced his way between the table and the torch-bearers, raised himself in his stirrups, drew his sword, gazed steadily in turn upon the sinister countenances round the great table, and upon the old hunter, and cried in a voice of thunder—

"*Pardieu*, spectres, ghosts, apparitions or visions, emperors or fiends, whosoever ye may be, I forbid you to make one step, or by the grace of God, I will show you all, even you, Man of Brass, how heavily the iron boot of a living knight can weigh upon the head of a phantom. I am in the abode of shadows, but for all that I will do real and terrible things. Stand aside, my masters! And you, miserable old man, who lied to me, you can fight as well as any youth, since you blow your horn with the strength and fury of a bull. Draw and defend yourself, or, by the Mass, I will run you through, though you were Pluto himself!"

"Ah! there you are, my dear fellow," said the old man. "Good; you shall sup with us."

The smile which accompanied this gracious invitation goaded Pécopin to fury.

"Defend yourself, old scoundrel; you made me a promise and deceived me."

"Hijo! wait for the end; what do you know about it?"

"Draw, I say."

"Heyday, my worthy friend, you take things amiss."

"Give me back Bauldour; you promised her to me."

"Who told you I was not going to give her back to

you? But what will you do with her when you see her again?"

"She is my betrothed, as you very well know, miserable wretch, and I shall marry her," said Pécopin.

"And so in a very short time there will be one melancholy and unhappy couple the more," said the old hunter, nodding his head. "Bah! what does it matter to me after all? It is the natural course of events; male and female here below have an evil example set them by the male and female up above, the sun and moon, a most ill-assorted pair, never seen together."

"Cease your jesting," cried the knight, "or I will make an end of you and of all these demons and their goddesses, and purge this cavern from end to end."

"Purge away, my friend," said the old man, with the laugh of a buffoon; "here is the prescription: rhubarb, senna, and Epsom salts."

Pécopin threw himself furiously upon him, sword in hand, but his horse had scarcely gone a step when he felt him tremble and sink down. A cold, pale streak of dawn had crept into the cavern and was gliding along the livid pavement. The old hunter still stood motionless and smiling, but all the bystanders began to fade away; the lights and torches burned low, the pale gaze of the spectres, a moment animated by Pécopin's outburst, was now completely extinguished, and through the huge brazen torso of the giant Nimrod, as through a glass vessel, the knight distinctly saw the pillars at the far end of the hall. His horse became gradually impalpable, and was melting away under him; his feet almost touched the ground.

Suddenly a cock crew. There was something indescribably weird in this clear, metallic, vibrating sound, which seemed to pierce Pécopin's ear like a steel blade. A light breeze sprang up, his horse vanished completely, he staggered and almost fell. When he recovered himself, all had disappeared. He was alone, standing, sword in hand, in a

ravine overgrown with heather—a few paces from a waterfall which foamed among the rocks, and at the gates of an ancient castle. It was daybreak. He lifted his eyes and uttered a cry of joy. It was the castle of Falkenburg.

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The cock crew a second time. The sound came from the inner courtyard of the castle. This cock, at whose shrill clarion the nightmare palace of the huntsmen of the night had crumbled into nothingness, had perhaps, a few hours earlier, fed from the blessed hands of Bauldour. O power of love, generous strength of the heart, fervid radiance of youth and passion! Scarcely had Pécopin seen again these well-loved towers than the fresh and dazzling image of his betrothed rose before him and filled him with light, dispersing like a fleeting vapour all the miseries of the past, the embassies of kings, the weary travel, the spectres, the frightful whirlpool of visions from which he had just escaped.

Pécopin sheathed his sword and strode towards the castle. Its windows, lit up by the earliest sunbeams, seemed to smile back at the smiling dawn. As he drew near the bridge, of which at the present day only one arch remains, a voice behind him said, "Well, Knight of Sonneck, have I kept my promise?"

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He turned. Two men stood among the heather. One was the masked huntsman, and Pécopin shuddered at the sight of him. He carried a red portfolio under his arm. The other was a little old humpbacked man, lame and hideously ugly. It was he that spoke to Pécopin, and Pécopin tried to recall where he had seen that face before.

"So, my good sir," continued the humpback, "you do not recognize me?"

"Yes, indeed I do," said Pécopin.

"That's right!"

"You are the slave from the shores of the Red Sea."

"I am the hunter of the forest of Lost Steps," answered the little man.

It was the foul fiend.

"By my faith," rejoined Pécopin, "be whomsoever you like, but, in short, since you have proved a man of your word, since here I am at Falkenburg, since I shall see Bauldour again, consider me your servant, sir, and I thank you heartily."

"Last night you upbraided me: what did I say to you?"

"You said, 'Wait for the end.'"

"And now you thank me, I say again, 'Wait for the end.' You were perhaps too hasty in your accusations; you are perhaps premature in your thanks."

As he spoke the little hunchback's face wore an expression quite indescribable: irony is the very countenance of the devil. Pécopin started.

"What do you mean?"

The devil pointed to the masked huntsman.

"Do you remember that man?"

"Yes."

"Do you know him?"

"No."

The huntsman unmasked. It was Erlangus. Pécopin felt himself tremble. The devil continued—

"Pécopin, you were my creditor. I owed you two things: this hump and this club foot. Now, I am an honest debtor. I went to look for your old servant Erlangus to find out your tastes. He told me you were fond of hunting. Then I said to myself it would be a thousand pities for so fine a hunter not to take part in the Black Hunt. As the sun set I met you in a woodland glade. You were in the forest of Lost Steps. I was just in time; the dwarf Roulon was going to take you. I took you myself."

Pécopin shuddered involuntarily. The devil went on—

"Had you not worn your talisman I would have kept

you, but I had as lief things should be as they are. Revenge is sweet, with whatever sauce it may be served."

"What do you mean, fiend?" Pécopin stammered.

The devil continued—

"To reward Erlangus for his information, I have made him my secretary; he has a good salary."

"Will you explain your meaning, you sorry blackguard?" repeated Pécopin.

"What was my promise?"

"That after this night spent in hunting with you, at sunrise you would bring me back to Falkenburg."

"You are there."

"Tell me, demon, is Bauldour dead?"

"No."

"Has she taken the veil?"

"No."

"Does she no longer love me?"

"She loves you still."

"Then, if you speak truth," cried Pécopin, drawing a long breath, as if relieved of a mountain weight, "whatever happens, and whosoever you may be, I thank you."

"Go, then," said the devil; "you are content, and so am I."

So saying, he seized Erlangus in his arms, though he was small and Erlangus was big, then twisting his lame leg round the other, and raising himself on tiptoe, he executed a pirouette, and Pécopin saw him plunge into the earth like a gimlet. A second afterwards he had disappeared.

In closing over the fiend the earth emitted a pretty little violet light, glowing with green sparks. It flickered gaily, with sundry fantastic leaps and twirls, as far as the forest, where it lingered for some time as if suspended from the branches, illuminating them with a thousand brilliant tints like a rainbow caught among the foliage.

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Pécopin shrugged his shoulders.

"Bauldour lives, Bauldour is free, Bauldour loves me,"

he thought; "what have I to fear? It was precisely five years yesterday evening, just before I met the fiend, since I left her; well, it is now five years and a day! I shall find her lovelier than ever. Woman is the fair sex, and twenty is the fairest age."

In those days of robust fidelity five years were a trifle.

Soliloquizing thus, Pécopin drew near the castle, recognizing with delight each embossment of the gateway, each indentation of the portcullis, each nail of the drawbridge. He felt himself happy and welcome. The threshold of the house which knew us as children, on seeing us grown-up men, seems to smile the happy smile of a mother.

As he crossed the bridge he noticed, near the third arch, a magnificent oak, the top of which towered above the parapet. "That is odd," he said to himself; "there used not to be any tree there." Then he remembered that, two or three weeks before the day when he fell in with the Palatine's hunting party, he had played knucklebones with Bauldour, using acorns for the purpose, and leaning the while on the parapet, and that at this very spot he had dropped an acorn in the moat.

"The deuce!" thought he; "in five years the acorn has become an oak. This is something like a soil!"

Four birds, perched on this oak tree, were trying which could chatter the loudest. They were a jackdaw, a blackbird, a magpie, and a raven. Pécopin scarcely noticed them, any more than he did a pigeon which was cooing in the dovecot, or a hen which clucked in the courtyard. He was thinking only of Bauldour, and hurried on. The sun was now showing above the horizon; the porters had just lowered the drawbridge. As Pécopin passed through the gateway he heard behind him a peal of laughter, which, though very distinct and very prolonged, yet sounded a great way off. It was the devil laughing in his den.

Under the archway there was a deep, still pool of water. The knight stooped over it and gazed at his reflection.

After the fatigues of his long journey, which had left him with scarcely more than a few rags to cover him, and more especially after the fearful strain of the night before, he thought he should be frightened by his own image. Not at all. Whether by virtue of the talisman given him by the Sultana, or from the effect of the elixir the demon had made him drink, he was more charming, fresher, younger than ever. What chiefly surprised him was to see himself magnificently apparelled from head to foot. His ideas were so completely confused that he could not recall at what time during the night he had been thus arrayed. His fine clothes became him mightily. He was dressed like a prince, and had the air of a paladin.

While gazing at his own image, somewhat astonished but well pleased, he heard a second peal of laughter, even more full of terrible mirth than the first. He looked round, but saw nothing. It was the devil laughing in his cavern.

As he crossed the principal courtyard the men-at-arms looked out from the battlements, but none recognized him, and he recognized no one. The short-kilted maid-servants washing the linen by the stream turned to look at him, but none knew him and he knew no one. Still, he had so noble an air that he was suffered to pass unchallenged. A grand air presupposes a great name. Pécopin knew his way, and made straight for the little winding stair that led to Bauldour's chamber. It struck him as he crossed the yard that the façade of the castle was not a little rugged and weather-beaten, and that the ivy which clothed the north front had grown immoderately thick, while the vine which clambered over the southern wall had strangely increased in girth. But a few blackened stones and a few leaves more or less are not enough to disconcert a lover.

When he reached the turret he had some difficulty in finding the door. At the time when Pécopin left the country Bauldour's father had just caused the entrance to be rebuilt with the beautiful white Heidelberg stone. This entrance,

which Pécopin calculated had been built just five years, was now much discoloured and cracked, and weeds had forced their way through here and there. Beneath the doorway several swallows had built their nests. But a lover's heart thinks but little of a few swallows' nests. If flashes of lightning were in the habit of mounting staircases, I should compare Pécopin to them. In the twinkling of an eye he had reached the fifth storey and stood before the door of Bauldour's retreat. This door, at least, was neither blackened nor in any way altered. It was still bright and spotless, the iron-work gleaming like silver and the wood-work as shining as the tresses of a lovely maiden.

It was easy to see that this was the same virginal door which Bauldour's women washed each day by order of their young mistress. The key was in the lock, as if Bauldour expected Pécopin. He had but to turn this key and enter. He paused, breathless with joy and tenderness—perhaps also from having flown up five flights of stair. Flames danced before his eyes, a buzzing was in his ears, his temples throbbed. When this first moment of excitement had passed, when silence succeeded to the inward tumult, he listened. Who could describe the emotions of this poor heart intoxicated with love? He heard through the door the sound of a spinning wheel.

* * * * * *

Of course it might easily be that this spinning wheel was not Bauldour's, and perhaps it was only one of her women spinning, for Bauldour's oratory was near by her room and she often spent her days there. If she spun much, she prayed still more. Pécopin told himself all this, but none the less he listened with ecstasy to the sound of the wheel. Such are the follies of a lover, especially when the lover has a high spirit and a great heart. Moments such as Pécopin was now living through are compounded of ecstasy which wants to linger and impatience which desires to advance. For a little while both tremble in the balance, then impatience

carries the day. At last he tremblingly touched the key, it turned in the lock, the door opened and he entered.

"Ah," thought he, "I was mistaken; it was not Bauldour's spinning wheel."

There was indeed someone spinning, but it was an old woman. Old woman is too mild a term; it was an old witch, for witches alone attain to such fabulous age and decrepitude.

Now, this crone seemed more than a hundred years old. Imagine, if you can, a poor little human or superhuman being, bowed and bent, tanned, bleared, shrunken, and crabbed; hair and eyebrows white, teeth and lips discoloured, emaciated, yellow, bald, cadaverous, palsied, and hideous. This venerable and terrible apparition was sitting, or rather cowering, near the window, her eyes fixed on her wheel, her distaff in her hand, like a Fate.

The good dame was probably very deaf, for the noise Pécopin made in opening the door and entering did not cause her to look up. Nevertheless the knight uncovered and saluted with all the observance due to such venerable age, and making a step forward, said—

"Madam duenna, where is Bauldour?"

The centenarian raised her eyes, let fall her thread, half raised herself from her seat, stretched forth towards Pécopin her long skeleton hands, fixed upon him a spectral gaze, and said in a voice so feeble and hollow that it seemed to come from the tomb—

"O Heaven, Sir Pécopin, what is it you need? Do you desire Masses said for your soul? Great God, are you dead, Sir Pécopin, that your spirit revisits us?"

"Upon my word, worthy dame," said Pécopin, breaking into laughter, and raising his voice so that Bauldour should hear him if she was in her oratory, a little surprised nevertheless that the aged duenna knew his name, "I am not dead—it is not my spirit which revisits you, but *I* who have returned, I, Pécopin, so please you, a jolly flesh-and-blood

ghost. And I want no Masses, but a kiss from my betrothed, from Bauldour, whom I love more than ever."

As he uttered these words, the old crone threw herself upon his neck.

It was Bauldour.

Alas! the night of the Devil's Hunt had lasted a hundred years. Bauldour was not dead, thanks to God, or to the foul fiend, but at the moment when Pécopin, himself as young, perhaps even handsomer than ever, found her again, the poor soul was one hundred and twenty years old.

* * * * * *

Pécopin fled in horror. He dashed down the stairs, rushed through the gateway, over the bridge, climbed the escarpment, crossed the ravine, leapt the torrent, forced his way through the undergrowth, scaled the mountain and took refuge in the Castle of Sonneck. He ran all day, terrified, desperate, beside himself. He still loved Bauldour, but the recollection of that ghastly figure filled him with terrified loathing. He could not tell what to make of his intellect, his memory, or his heart. When night came, seeing that he had wandered close to the towers of the castle where he was born, he rent the magnificent garments of mockery in which the devil had clothed him, and flung them into the profoundest depths of the torrent of Sonneck. Then, tearing his hair, he all at once perceived that he held a handful of white hairs. Suddenly his knees shook, his back became bowed, he was forced to lean against a tree, his hands were deeply wrinkled. In the wildness of his grief, having lost all consciousness of what he did, he had seized the talisman, wrenched it from his neck, and hurled it with his raiment into the torrent. And the words of the Sultana's slave were accomplished on the instant. He had aged a hundred years. In the morning he had lost his love, in the evening he lost his youth. At that moment, for the third time on this fatal day, someone laughed behind him. He turned, but saw nobody. It was the devil laughing in his cavern.

What could he do after this final blow? He picked up a stick, dropped by some woodcutter, and leaning on it walked painfully to his castle, which was fortunately very near. As he approached it he saw, in the twilight, a jay, a magpie, a blackbird, and a raven perched over the entrance, who seemed to await him. He heard a hen, which he could not see, say "Pécopin, Pécopin," and he heard a pigeon, which he could not see, say "Bauldour, Bauldour." Then he remembered his dream at Bacharach, the words spoken, alas! a hundred and five years ago by the old man who was piling logs against a wall.

"Sir, to the ear of the young man the jay chatters, the magpie screeches, the blackbird whistles, the raven croaks, the pigeon coos, and the hen clucks; for the old man, the birds talk."

He listened, therefore, and this is the dialogue he heard—

THE BLACKBIRD.

At last, my bold hunter, you come to your home.

THE JAY.

He who starts for a day, for a year he may roam.

THE RAVEN.

Kite, vulture, and eagle you hunted, I ween,

THE MAGPIE.

But the soft bird of love should your quarry have been.

THE HEN.

Pécopin! Pécopin!

THE PIGEON.

Bauldour! Bauldour! Bauldour!

PROSPER MÉRIMÉE

(1803–1870)

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(I)

THE VENUS OF ILLE

(Translated by GEORGE BURNHAM IVES)

Ἰλεὼς ἦν δ' ἐγὼ, ἔστω ὁ ἀνδρίας
Καὶ ἤπιος, οὕτως ἀνδρεῖος ὤν.
ΛΟΥΚΙΑΝΟΥ ΦΙΛΟΨΕΥΔΗΣ.

I WAS descending the last slope of Canigou, and, although the sun had already set, I could distinguish in the plain below the houses of the little town of Ille, for which I was bound.

"You know," I said to the Catalan who had been acting as my guide since the preceding day, "you know, doubtless, where Monsieur de Peyrehorade lives?"

"Do I know!" he cried; "why, I know his house as well as I do my own; and if it wasn't so dark, I'd show it to you. It's the finest house in Ille. He has money, you know, has Monsieur de Peyrehorade; and his son is going to marry a girl that's richer than himself."

"Is the marriage to take place soon?" I asked.

"Soon! It may be that the fiddles are already ordered for the wedding. To-night, perhaps, or to-morrow, or the day after, for all I know! It's to be at Puygarrig; for it's Mademoiselle de Puygarrig that the young gentleman is going to marry."

I had a letter of introduction to M. de Peyrehorade from my friend M. de P. He was, so my friend had told me, a very learned antiquarian, and good-natured and obliging to the last degree. He would take pleasure in showing me

all the ruins within a radius of ten leagues. Now, I relied upon him to accompany me about the country near Ille, which I knew to be rich in monuments of ancient times and of the Middle Ages. This marriage, of which I now heard for the first time, might upset all my plans.

"I shall be an interloper," I said to myself.

But I was expected; as my arrival had been announced by M. de P., I must needs present myself.

"I'll bet you, Monsieur," said my guide, as we reached the foot of the mountain, "I'll bet you a cigar that I can guess what you are going to do at Monsieur de Peyrehorade's."

"Why, that is not very hard to guess," I replied, offering him a cigar. "At this time of day, when one has walked six leagues over Canigou, the most urgent business is supper."

"Yes, but to-morrow? Look you, I'll bet that you have come to Ille to see the idol! I guessed that when I saw you drawing pictures of the saints at Serrabona."

"The idol! what idol?" The word had aroused my curiosity.

"What! didn't anyone at Perpignan tell you how Monsieur de Peyrehorade had found an idol in the ground?"

"You mean a terra-cotta, or clay statue, don't you?"

"No, indeed! I mean a copper one, and it's big enough to make a lot of big sous. It weighs as much as a church bell. It was way down in the ground, at the foot of an olive tree, that we found it."

"So you were present at the discovery, were you?"

"Yes, Monsieur. Monsieur de Peyrehorade told us a fortnight ago, Jean Coll and me, to dig up an old olive tree that got frozen last year—for it was a very hard winter, you know. So, while we were at work, Jean Coll, who was going at it with all his might, dug his pick into the dirt, and I heard a *bimm*—just as if he'd struck a bell.—'What's that?' says I. We kept on digging and digging,

and first a black hand showed; it looked like a dead man's hand sticking out of the ground. For my part, I was scared. I goes to monsieur, and I says to him: 'Dead men under the olive tree, master. You'd better call the curé.'

"'What dead men?' he says.

"He went with me, and he'd no sooner seen the hand than he sings out: 'An antique! an antique!' You'd have thought he had found a treasure. And to work he went with the pick and with his hands, and did as much as both of us together, you might say."

"Well, what did you find?"

"A tall black woman more than half naked, saving your presence, monsieur, of solid copper; and Monsieur de Peyrehorade told us that it was an idol of heathen times—of the time of Charlemagne!"

"I see what it is: a bronze Blessed Virgin from some dismantled convent."

"A Blessed Virgin! oh, yes! I should have recognized it if it had been a Blessed Virgin. It's an idol, I tell you; you can see that from its expression. It fastens its great white eyes on you; you'd think it was trying to stare you out of countenance. Why, you actually lower your eyes when you look at it."

"White eyes? They are incrusted on the bronze, no doubt. It may be some Roman statue."

"Roman! that's it. Monsieur de Peyrehorade says she's a Roman.—Ah! I see that you're a scholar like him."

"Is it whole, well preserved?"

"Oh! it's all there, monsieur. It's even handsomer and finished better than the plaster of Paris bust of Louis Philippe at the mayor's office. But for all that, I can't get over the idol's face. It has a wicked look—and she is wicked too."

"Wicked! what harm has she done you?"

"None to me exactly; but I'll tell you. We had got down on all-fours to stand her up, and Monsieur de Peyre-

horade, he was pulling on the rope too, although he hasn't any more strength than a chicken, the excellent man! With a good deal of trouble we got her on her feet. I was picking up a piece of stone to wedge her, when, *patatras!* down she went again, all in a heap. 'Stand from under!' says I. But I was too late, for Jean Coll didn't have time to pull out his leg."

"And he was hurt?"

"His poor leg broken off short like a stick! *Pécaïre!* when I saw that, I was furious. I wanted to smash the idol with my pickaxe, but Monsieur de Peyrehorade held me back. He gave Jean Coll some money, but he's been in bed all the same ever since it happened, a fortnight ago, and the doctor says he'll never walk with that leg like the other. It's a pity, for he was our best runner, and, next to monsieur's son, the best tennis-player. I tell you, it made Monsieur Alphonse de Peyrehorade feel bad, for Coll always played with him. It was fine to see how they'd send the balls back at each other. Paf! paf! They never touched the ground."

Chatting thus we entered Ille, and I soon found myself in M. de Peyrehorade's presence. He was a little old man, still hale and active, with powdered hair, a red nose, and a jovial, bantering air. Before opening M. de P.'s letter, he installed himself in front of a bountifully spread table, and introduced me to his wife and son as an illustrious archæologist, who was destined to rescue Roussillon from the oblivion in which the indifference of scholars had thus far left it.

While eating with a hearty appetite—for nothing is more conducive thereto than the keen mountain air—I examined my hosts. I have already said a word or two of M. de Peyrehorade; I must add that he was vivacity personified. He talked, ate, rose from his chair, ran to his library, brought books to me, showed me prints, filled my glass; he was never at rest for two minutes in succession. His wife, who was a trifle too stout, like all the Catalan women after they

have passed forty, impressed me as a typical provincial, who had no interests outside of her household. Although the supper was ample for at least six persons, she ran to the kitchen, ordered pigeons killed, all sorts of things fried, and opened Heaven knows how many jars of preserves. In an instant the table was laden with dishes and bottles, and I should certainly have died of indigestion if I had even tasted everything that was offered me. And yet, with every new dish that I declined there were renewed apologies. She was afraid that I would find myself very badly off at Ille. One had so few resources in the provinces, and Parisians were so hard to please!

Amid all the goings and comings of his parents, M. Alphonse de Peyrehorade sat as motionless as the god Terminus. He was a tall young man of twenty-six, with a handsome and regular face, which, however, lacked expression. His figure and his athletic proportions fully justified the reputation of an indefatigable tennis player which he enjoyed throughout the province. On this evening he was dressed in the height of fashion, exactly in accordance with the engraving in the last number of the *Journal des Modes*. But he seemed ill at ease in his clothes; he was as stiff as a picket in his velvet stock, and moved his whole body when he turned. His rough, sunburned hands and short nails formed a striking contrast to his costume. They were the hands of a ploughman emerging from the sleeves of a dandy. Furthermore, although he scrutinized me with interest from head to foot, I being a Parisian, he spoke to me but once during the evening, and that was to ask me where I bought my watch-chain.

"Look you, my dear guest," said M. de Peyrehorade, as the supper drew to a close, "you belong to me, you are in my house; I shall not let you go until you have seen everything of interest that we have in our mountains. You must learn to know our Roussillon, and you must do her justice. You have no suspicion of all that we are going to show

you: Phœnician, Celtic, Roman, Arabian, Byzantine monuments—you shall see them all, from the cedar to the hyssop. I will take you everywhere, and I will not let you off from a single brick."

A paroxysm of coughing compelled him to pause. I seized the opportunity to say that I should be distressed to incommode him at a season so fraught with interest to his family. If he would simply give me the benefit of his excellent advice as to the excursions it would be well for me to make, I could easily, without putting him to the trouble of accompanying me——

"Ah! you refer to this boy's marriage," he exclaimed, interrupting me. "That's a mere trifle—it will take place day after to-morrow. You must attend the wedding with us, *en famille*, as the bride is in mourning for an aunt whose property she inherits. So there are to be no festivities, no ball. It is too bad, for you might have seen our Catalan girls dance. They are very pretty, and perhaps you would have felt inclined to follow my Alphonse's example. One marriage, they say, leads to others.—Saturday, when the young people are married, I shall be free, and we will take the field. I ask your pardon for subjecting you to the ennui of a provincial wedding. For a Parisian, sated with parties of all sorts—and a wedding without a ball, at that! However, you will see a bride—a bride—you must tell me what you think of her. But you are a serious man, and you don't look at women any more. I have something better than that to show you. I will show you something worth seeing! I have a famous surprise in store for you to-morrow."

"Mon Dieu!" said I, "it is difficult to keep a treasure in one's house without the public knowing all about it. I fancy that I can divine the surprise that you have in store for me. But if you refer to your statue, the description of it that my guide gave me has served simply to arouse my curiosity and to predispose me to admiration."

"Ah! so he spoke to you about the idol—for that is what they call my beautiful Venus Tur—but I will tell you nothing now. You shall see her to-morrow, by daylight, and tell me whether I am justified in considering her a *chef-d'œuvre.* Parbleu! you could not have arrived more opportunely! There are some inscriptions which I, poor ignoramus that I am, interpret after my manner. But a scholar from Paris! It may be that you will make fun of my interpretation—for I have written a memoir—I, who speak to you, an old provincial antiquary, have made a start; I propose to make the printing presses groan. If you would kindly read and correct me, I might hope. For example, I am very curious to know how you will translate this inscription on the pedestal: CAVE—but I won't ask you anything yet. Until to-morrow! until to-morrow! Not a word about the Venus to-day!"

"You are quite right, Peyrehorade," said his wife, "to let your old idol rest. You must see that you are keeping monsieur from eating. Bah! monsieur has seen much finer statues than yours in Paris. There are dozens of them at the Tuileries, and bronze ones too."

"There you have the ignorance, the blessed ignorance of the provinces!" interrupted M. de Peyrehorade. "Think of comparing an admirable antique to Coustou's insipid figures!

'With what irreverence
Doth my good wife speak of the gods!'

Would you believe that my wife wanted me to melt my statue and make it into a bell for our church! She would have been the donor, you see. A *chef-d'œuvre* of Myron, monsieur!"

"*Chef-d'œuvre! chef-d'œuvre!* a pretty *chef-d'œuvre* she made! to break a man's leg!"

"Look you, my wife," said M. de Peyrehorade in a determined tone, extending his right leg encased in a stocking of Chinese silk, in her direction, "if my Venus had broken this leg, I should not regret it."

" Gracious Heaven! how can you say that, Peyrehorade? Luckily the man is getting better. Still, I can't make up my mind to look at the statue that causes such accidents as that. Poor Jean Coll! "

" Wounded by Venus, monsieur," said M. de Peyrehorade, with a chuckle, " wounded by Venus, the clown complains:

' Veneris nec præmia noris.'

" Who has not been wounded by Venus? "

M. Alphonse, who understood French better than Latin, winked with a knowing look, and glanced at me as if to ask:

" And you, Monsieur le Parisien, do you understand? "

The supper came to an end. I had eaten nothing for the last hour. I was tired and I could not succeed in dissembling the frequent yawns which escaped me. Madame de Peyrehorade was the first to notice my plight and observed that it was time to go to bed. Thereupon began a new series of apologies for the wretched accommodations I was to have. I should not be as comfortable as I was in Paris. One is so badly off in the provinces! I must be indulgent for the Roussillonnais. In vain did I protest that after a journey in the mountains a sheaf of straw would be a luxurious bed for me—she continued to beg me to excuse unfortunate country folk if they did not treat me as well as they would have liked to do. I went upstairs at last to the room allotted to me, escorted by M. de Peyrehorade. The staircase, the upper stairs of which were of wood, ended in the centre of a corridor upon which several rooms opened.

" At the right," said my host, " is the apartment which I intend to give to Madame Alphonse that is to be. Your room is at the end of the opposite corridor. You know," he added, with an expression meant to be sly, " you know we must put a newly-married couple all by themselves. You are at one end of the house and they at the other."

We entered a handsomely furnished room, in which the first object that caught my eye was a bed seven feet long, six feet wide, and so high that one had to use a stool to climb to the top. My host, having pointed out the location of the bell, having assured himself that the sugar-bowl was full, and that the bottles of Cologne had been duly placed on the dressing-table, and having asked me several times if I had everything that I wanted, wished me a good-night and left me alone.

The windows were closed. Before undressing I opened one of them to breathe the fresh night air, always delicious after a long supper. In front of me was Canigou, beautiful to look at always, but that evening it seemed to me the most beautiful mountain in the world, lighted as it was by a brilliant moon. I stood for some minutes gazing at its wonderful silhouette, and was on the point of closing my window when, as I lowered my eyes, I saw the statue on a pedestal some forty yards from the house. It was placed at the corner of a quickset hedge which separated a small garden from a large square of perfectly smooth turf, which, as I learned later, was the tennis court of the town. This tract, which belonged to M. de Peyrehorade, had been ceded by him to the commune, at his son's urgent solicitation.

I was so far from the statue that I could not distinguish its attitude and could only guess at its height, which seemed to be about six feet. At that moment two young scamps from the town walked across the tennis court, quite near the hedge, whistling the pretty Roussillon air, *Montagnes Régalades*. They stopped to look at the statue, and one of them apostrophized it in a loud voice. He spoke Catalan; but I had been long enough in Roussillon to understand pretty nearly what he said.

"So there you are, hussy!" (The Catalan term was much more forcible.) "So there you are!" he said. "So it was you who broke Jean Coll's leg! If you belonged to me, I'd break your neck!"

"Bah! with what?" said the other. "She's made of copper, and it's so hard that Étienne broke his file, trying to file it. It's copper of the heathen times, and it's harder than I don't know what."

"If I had my cold chisel"—it seemed that he was a locksmith's apprentice—"I'd soon dig out her big white eyes, as easy as I'd take an almond out of its shell. They'd make more than a hundred sous in silver."

They walked away a few steps.

"I must bid the idol good-night," said the taller of the two, suddenly stopping again.

He stooped, and, I suppose, picked up a stone. I saw him raise his arm and throw something, and instantly there was a ringing blow on the bronze. At the same moment the apprentice put his hand to his head, with a sharp cry of pain.

"She threw it back at me!" he exclaimed.

And my two rascals fled at the top of their speed. It was evident that the stone had rebounded from the metal, and had punished the fellow for his affront to the goddess.

I closed my window, laughing heartily.

"Still another vandal chastised by Venus!" I thought. "May all the destroyers of our ancient monuments have their heads broken thus!"

And with that charitable prayer I fell asleep.

It was broad daylight when I woke. Beside my bed were, on one side, M. de Peyrehorade in his *robe de chambre;* on the other a servant, sent by his wife, with a cup of chocolate in his hand.

"Come, up with you, Parisian! This is just like you sluggards from the capital!" said my host, while I hastily dressed myself. "It is eight o'clock, and you are still in bed! I have been up since six. This is the third time I have come upstairs; I came to your door on tiptoe; not a sound, not a sign of life. It will injure you to sleep too

much at your age. And you haven't seen my Venus yet! Come, drink this cup of Barcelona chocolate quickly. Genuine contraband, such chocolate as you don't get in Paris. You must lay up some strength, for, when you once stand in front of my Venus, I shall not be able to tear you away from her."

In five minutes I was ready—that is to say, half shaved, my clothes half buttoned, and my throat scalded by the chocolate, which I had swallowed boiling hot. I went down into the garden and found myself before a really beautiful statue.

It was, in truth, a Venus, and wonderfully lovely. The upper part of the body was nude, as the ancients ordinarily represented the great divinities; the right hand, raised as high as the breast, was turned with the palm inward, the thumb and first two fingers extended, the other two slightly bent. The other hand was near the hip and held the drapery that covered the lower part of the body. The pose of the statue recalled that of the Morra Player, usually known, I know not why, by the name of Germanicus. Perhaps the sculptor intended to represent the goddess playing the game of morra.

However that may be, it is impossible to imagine anything more perfect than the body of that Venus; anything more harmonious, more voluptuous than her outlines, anything more graceful and more dignified than her drapery. I expected to see some work of the later Empire; I saw a *chef-d'œuvre* of the best period of statuary. What especially struck me was the exquisite verisimilitude of the forms, which one might have believed to have been moulded from nature, if nature ever produced such flawless models.

The hair, which was brushed back from the forehead, seemed to have been gilded formerly. The head, which was small, like those of almost all Greek statues, was bent slightly forward. As for the face, I shall never succeed in describing its peculiar character; it was of a type which in

no wise resembled that of any antique statue that I can remember. It was not the tranquil, severe beauty of the Greek sculptors, who systematically imparted a majestic immobility to all the features. Here, on the contrary, I observed with surprise a clearly marked intention on the part of the artist to express mischievousness amounting almost to devilry. All the features were slightly contracted; the eyes were a little oblique, the corners of the mouth raised, the nostrils a little dilated. Disdain, irony, cruelty could be read upon that face, which none the less was inconceivably lovely. In truth, the more one looked at that marvellous statue the more distressed one felt at the thought that such wonderful beauty could be conjoined to utter absence of sensibility.

"If the model ever existed," I said to M. de Peyrehorade —"and I doubt whether Heaven ever produced such a woman—how I pity her lovers! She must have delighted in driving them to death from despair. There is something downright savage in her expression, and yet I never have seen anything so beautiful!"

"'Tis Venus all intent upon her prey!" quoted M. de Peyrehorade, delighted with my enthusiasm.

That expression of infernal irony was heightened perhaps by the contrast between the very brilliant silver eyes and the coating of blackish-green with which time had overlaid the whole statue. Those gleaming eyes created a certain illusion which suggested reality, life. I remembered what my guide had said, that she made those who looked at her lower their eyes. That was almost true, and I could not help feeling angry with myself as I realized that I was perceptibly ill at ease before that bronze figure.

"Now that you have admired her in every detail, my dear colleague in antiquarian research," said my host, "let us open a scientific conference, if you please. What do you say to this inscription, which you have not noticed as yet?"

He pointed to the base of the statue, and I read there these words:

CAVE AMANTEM.

"*Quid dicis, doctissime?*" ("What do you say, most learned of men?") he asked, rubbing his hands. "Let us see if we shall agree as to the meaning of this *cave amantem.*"

"Why, there are two possible meanings," I said. "It may be translated: 'Beware of him who loves you—distrust lovers.' But I am not sure that *cave amantem* would be good Latin in that sense. In view of the lady's diabolical expression, I should be inclined to believe rather that the artist meant to put the spectator on his guard against that terrible beauty. So that I should translate: 'Look out for yourself if *she* loves you.'"

"Humph!" ejaculated M. de Peyrehorade; "yes, that is a possible translation; but, with all respect, I prefer the first, which I will develop a little, however. You know who Venus's lover was?"

"She had several."

"Yes, but the first one was Vulcan. Did not the artist mean to say: 'Despite all your beauty, and your scornful air, you shall have a blacksmith, a wretched cripple, for a lover'? A solemn lesson for coquettes, monsieur!"

I could not help smiling, the interpretation seemed to me so exceedingly far-fetched.

"The Latin is a terrible language, with its extraordinary conciseness," I observed, to avoid contradicting my antiquary directly; and I stepped back a few steps, to obtain a better view of the statue.

"One moment, colleague!" said M. de Peyrehorade, seizing my arm, "you have not seen all. There is still another inscription. Stand on the pedestal and look at the right arm."

As he spoke, he helped me to climb up.

I clung somewhat unceremoniously to the neck of the

Venus, with whom I was beginning to feel on familiar terms. I even looked her in the eye for an instant, and I found her still more diabolical and still lovelier at close quarters. Then I saw that there were some letters, in what I took to be the antique cursive hand, engraved on the right arm. With the aid of a strong glass I spelled out what follows, M. de Peyrehorade repeating each word as I pronounced it, and expressing his approbation with voice and gesture. I read:

VENERI TVRBVL—
EVTYCHES MYRO
IMPERIO FECIT

After the word *tvrbvl* in the first line several letters seemed to have become effaced, but *tvrbvl* was perfectly legible.

"Which means?"—queried my host, with a beaming face, and winking maliciously, for he had a shrewd idea that I would not easily handle that *tvrbvl*.

"There is one word here which I do not understand as yet," I said; "all the rest is simple. 'Eutyches made this offering to Venus by her order.'"

"Excellent. But what do you make of *tvrbvl?* What is *tvrbvl?*"

"*Tvrbvl* puzzles me a good deal. I have tried in vain to think of some known epithet of Venus to assist me. What would you say to *Turbulenta?* Venus, who disturbs, who excites—as you see, I am still engrossed by her evil expression. *Turbulenta* is not a very inapt epithet for Venus," I added modestly, for I was not very well satisfied myself with my explanation.

"Turbulent Venus! Venus the roisterer! Ah! so you think that my Venus is a wine-shop Venus, do you? Not by any means, monsieur; she is a Venus in good society. But I will explain this *tvrbvl* to you. Of course you will promise not to divulge my discovery before my memoir is

printed. You see, I am very proud of this find of mine. You must leave us poor devils in the provinces a few spears to glean. You are so rich, you Parisian scholars!"

From the top of the pedestal, whereon I was still perched, I solemnly promised him that I would never be guilty of the baseness of stealing his discovery.

"*Tvrbvl*—monsieur," he said, coming nearer to me and lowering his voice, for fear that some other than myself might hear—"read *tvrbvlneræ*."

"I don't understand any better."

"Listen. About a league from here, at the foot of the mountain, is a village called Boulternère. That name is a corruption of the Latin word *Turbulnera*. Nothing is more common than such inversions. Boulternère, monsieur, was a Roman city. I have always suspected as much, but I have never had a proof of it. Here is the proof. This Venus was the local divinity of the city of Boulternère; and this word Boulternère, whose antique origin I have just demonstrated, proves something even more interesting—namely, that Boulternère, before it became a Roman city, was a Phœnician city!"

He paused a moment to take breath and to enjoy my surprise. I succeeded in restraining a very strong inclination to laugh.

"It is a fact," he continued, "*Turbulnera* is pure Phœnician; *Tur*, pronounced *Tour*—*Tour* and *Sour* are the same word, are they not? *Sour* is the Phœnician name of Tyre; I do not need to remind you of its meaning. *Bul* is Baal; Bal, Bel, Bul—slight differences in pronunciation. As for *nera*—that gives me a little trouble. I am inclined to believe, failing to find a Phœnician word, that it comes from the Greek word *νηρός*, damp, swampy. In that case the word would be a hybrid. To justify my suggestion of *νηρός*, I will show you that at Boulternère the streams from the mountain form miasmatic pools. On the other hand, the termination *nera* may have been added much later, in

honour of Nera Pivesuvia, wife of Tetricus, who may have had some property in the city of Turbul. But on account of the pools I prefer the etymology from *νηρός*."

And he took a pinch of snuff with a self-satisfied air.

"But let us leave the Phœnicians and return to the inscription. I translate then: 'To Venus of Boulternère, Myron, at her command, dedicates this statue, his work.'"

I had no idea of criticizing his etymology, but I did desire to exhibit some little penetration on my own part; so I said to him:

"Stop there a moment, monsieur. Myron dedicated something, but I see nothing to indicate that it was this statue."

"What!" he cried, "was not Myron a famous Greek sculptor? The talent probably was handed down in the family; it was one of his descendants who executed this statue. Nothing can be more certain."

"But," I rejoined, "I see a little hole in the arm. I believe that it was made to fasten something to—a bracelet, perhaps, which this Myron presented to Venus as an expiatory offering.—Myron was an unsuccessful lover; Venus was irritated with him and he appeased her by consecrating a gold bracelet to her. Observe that *fecit* is very often used in the sense of *consecravit;* they are synonymous terms. I could show you more than one example of what I say if I had Gruter or Orellius at hand. It would be quite natural for a lover to see Venus in a dream and to fancy that she ordered him to give a gold bracelet to her statue. So Myron consecrated a bracelet to her; then the barbarians, or some sacrilegious thief——"

"Ah! it is easy to see that you have written novels!" cried my host, giving me his hand to help me descend. "No, monsieur, it is a work of the school of Myron. Look at the workmanship simply and you will agree."

Having made it a rule never to contradict outright an obstinate antiquarian, I hung my head with the air of one fully persuaded, saying:

"It's an admirable thing."

"Ah! mon Dieu!" cried M. de Peyrehorade; "still another piece of vandalism! Somebody must have thrown a stone at my statue!"

He had just discovered a white mark a little above Venus's breast. I observed a similar mark across the fingers of the right hand, which I then supposed had been grazed by the stone; or else that a fragment of the stone had been broken off by the blow and had bounded against the hand. I told my host about the insult that I had witnessed, and the speedy retribution that had followed. He laughed heartily, and, comparing the apprentice to Diomedes, expressed a hope that, like the Grecian hero, he might see all his companions transformed into birds.

The breakfast bell interrupted this classical conversation, and I was again obliged, as on the preceding day, to eat for four. Then M. de Peyrehorade's farmers appeared; and while he gave audience to them, his son took me to see a calèche which he had bought at Toulouse for his fiancée, and which I admired, it is needless to say. Then I went with him into the stable, where he kept me half an hour, boasting of his horses, giving me their genealogies, and telling me of the prizes they had won at various races in the province. At last he reached the subject of his future wife, by a natural transition from a grey mare he intended for her.

"We shall see her to-day," he said. "I do not know whether you will think her pretty; but everybody here and at Perpignan considers her charming. The best thing about her is that she's very rich. Her aunt at Prades left her all her property. Oh! I am going to be very happy."

I was intensely disgusted to see a young man more touched by the dowry than by the *beaux yeux* of his betrothed.

"You know something about jewels," continued M. Alphonse; "what do you think of this one? This is the ring that I am going to give her to-morrow."

As he spoke, he took from the first joint of his little finger a huge ring with many diamonds, made in the shape of two clasped hands; an allusion which seemed to me exceedingly poetical. The workmanship was very old, but I judged that it had been changed somewhat to allow the diamonds to be set. On the inside of the ring were these words in Gothic letters: *Sempr' ab ti;* that is to say, "Always with thee."

"It is a handsome ring," I said, "but these diamonds have taken away something of its character."

"Oh! it is much handsomer so," he replied, with a smile. "There are twelve hundred francs' worth of diamonds. My mother gave it to me. It was a very old family ring—of the times of chivalry. It belonged to my grandmother, who had it from hers. God knows when it was made."

"The custom in Paris," I said, "is to give a very simple ring, usually made of two different metals, as gold and platinum, for instance. See, that other ring, which you wear on this finger, would be most suitable. This one, with its diamonds and its hands in relief is so big that one could not wear a glove over it."

"Oh! Madame Alphonse may arrange that as she pleases. I fancy that she will be very glad to have it all the same. Twelve hundred francs on one's finger is very pleasant. This little ring," he added, glancing fatuously at the plain one which he wore, "was given me by a woman in Paris one Mardi Gras. Ah! how I did go it when I was in Paris two years ago! That's the place where one enjoys one's self!"

And he heaved a sigh of regret.

We were to dine that day at Puygarrig with the bride's parents; we drove in the calèche to the château, about a league and a half from Ille. I was presented and made welcome as a friend of the family. I will say nothing of the dinner or of the conversation which followed it, and in

which I took little part. M. Alphonse, seated beside his fiancée, said a word in her ear every quarter of an hour. As for her, she hardly raised her eyes, and whenever her future husband addressed her she blushed modestly, but replied without embarrassment.

Mademoiselle de Puygarrig was eighteen years of age; her supple and delicate figure formed a striking contrast to the bony frame of her athletic fiancé. She was not only lovely, but fascinating. I admired the perfect naturalness of all her replies; and her good-humoured air, which, however, was not exempt from a slight tinge of mischief, reminded me, in spite of myself, of my host's Venus. As I made this comparison mentally, I asked myself whether the superiority in the matter of beauty, which I could not choose but accord to the statue, did not consist in large measure in her tigress-like expression; for energy, even in evil passions, always arouses in us a certain surprise and a sort of involuntary admiration.

"What a pity," I said to myself as we left Puygarrig, "that such an attractive person should be rich, and that her dowry should cause her to be sought in marriage by a man who is unworthy of her!"

On the way back to Ille, finding some difficulty in talking with Madame de Peyrehorade, whom, however, I thought it only courteous to address now and then, I exclaimed:

"You are very strong-minded here in Roussillon! To think of having a wedding on a Friday, madame! We are more superstitious in Paris; no one would dare to take a wife on that day."

"Mon Dieu! don't mention it," said she; "if it had depended on me, they certainly would have chosen another day. But Peyrehorade would have it so, and I had to give way to him. It distresses me, however. Suppose anything should happen? There must surely be some reason for the superstition, for why else should everyone be afraid of Friday?"

"Friday!" cried her husband; "Friday is Venus's day! A splendid day for a wedding! You see, my dear colleague, I think of nothing but my Venus. On my honour, it was on her account that I chose a Friday. To-morrow, if you are willing, before the wedding, we will offer a little sacrifice to her; we will sacrifice two pigeons, if I can find any incense."

"For shame, Peyrehorade!" his wife interposed, scandalized to the last degree. "Burn incense to an idol! That would be an abomination! What would people in the neighbourhood say about you?"

"At least," said M. de Peyrehorade, "you will allow me to place a wreath of roses and lilies on her head:

'Manibus date lilia plenis.'

The charter, you see, monsieur, is an empty word; we have no freedom of worship!"

The order of ceremonies for the following day was thus arranged: everybody was to be fully dressed and ready at precisely ten o'clock. After taking a cup of chocolate, we were to drive to Puygarrig. The civil ceremony would take place at the mayor's office of that village, and the religious ceremony in the chapel of the château. Then there would be a breakfast. After that, we were to pass the time as best we could until seven o'clock, when we were to return to Ille, to M. de Peyrehorade's, where the two families were to sup together. The rest followed as a matter of course. Being unable to dance, the plan was to eat as much as possible.

At eight o'clock I was already seated in front of the Venus, pencil in hand, beginning for the twentieth time to draw the head of the statue, whose expression I was still absolutely unable to catch. M. de Peyrehorade hovered about me, gave me advice, and repeated his Phœnician etymologies; then he arranged some Bengal roses on the pedestal of the statue, and in a tragi-comic tone addressed

supplications to it for the welfare of the couple who were to live under his roof. About nine o'clock he returned to the house to dress, and at the same time M. Alphonse appeared, encased in a tightly-fitting new coat, white gloves, patent-leather shoes, and carved buttons, with a rose in his buttonhole.

"Will you paint my wife's portrait?" he asked, leaning over my drawing; "she is pretty too."

At that moment a game of tennis began on the court I have mentioned, and it immediately attracted M. Alphonse's attention. And I myself, being rather tired, and hopeless of being able to reproduce that diabolical face, soon left my drawing to watch the players. Among them were several Spanish muleteers who had arrived in the town the night before. There were Aragonese and Navarrese, almost all wonderfully skilful at the game. So that the men of Ille, although encouraged by the presence and counsels of M. Alphonse, were speedily beaten by these new champions. The native spectators were appalled. M. Alphonse glanced at his watch. It was only half after nine. His mother's hair was not dressed. He no longer hesitated, but took off his coat, asked for a jacket, and challenged the Spaniards. I watched him, smiling at his eagerness, and a little surprised.

"I must uphold the honour of the province," he said to me.

At that moment I considered him really handsome. He was thoroughly in earnest. His costume, which engrossed him so completely a moment before, was of no consequence. A few minutes earlier he was afraid to turn his head for fear of disarranging his cravat. Now, he paid no heed to his carefully curled locks, or to his beautifully laundered ruff. And his fiancée?—Faith, I believe that, if it had been necessary, he would have postponed the wedding. I saw him hastily put on a pair of sandals, turn back his sleeves, and with an air of confidence take his place at the head of the beaten side, like Cæsar rallying his legions at

Dyrrhachium. I leaped over the hedge and found a convenient place in the shade of a plum tree, where I could see both camps.

Contrary to general expectation, M. Alphonse missed the first ball; to be sure, it skimmed along the ground, driven with astounding force by an Aragonese who seemed to be the leader of the Spaniards.

He was a man of some forty years, thin and wiry, about six feet tall; and his olive skin was almost as dark as the bronze of the Venus.

M. Alphonse dashed his racquet to the ground in a passion.

"It was this infernal ring," he cried: "it caught my finger and made me miss a sure ball!"

He removed the diamond ring, not without difficulty, and I stepped forward to take it; but he anticipated me, ran to the Venus, slipped the ring on her third finger, and resumed his position at the head of his townsmen.

He was pale, but calm and determined. Thereafter he did not make a single mistake, and the Spaniards were completely routed. The enthusiasm of the spectators was a fine spectacle; some shouted for joy again and again, and tossed their caps in the air; others shook his hands and called him an honour to the province. If he had repelled an invasion, I doubt whether he would have received more enthusiastic and more sincere congratulations. The chagrin of the defeated party added still more to the splendour of his victory.

"We will play again, my good fellow," he said to the Aragonese in a lofty tone; "but I will give you points."

I should have been glad if M. Alphonse had been more modest, and I was almost distressed by his rival's humiliation. The Spanish giant felt the insult keenly. I saw him turn pale under his tanned skin. He glanced with a sullen expression at his racquet, and ground his teeth; then he muttered in a voice choked with rage:

"*Me lo pagarás!*"

M. de Peyrehorade's appearance interrupted his son's triumph. My host, greatly surprised not to find him superintending the harnessing of the new calèche, was much more surprised when he saw him drenched with perspiration, and with his racquet in his hand. M. Alphonse ran to the house, washed his face and hands, resumed his new coat and his patent-leather boots, and five minutes later we were driving rapidly toward Puygarrig. All the tennis-players of the town and a great number of spectators followed us with joyous shouts. The stout horses that drew us could hardly keep in advance of those dauntless Catalans.

We had reached Puygarrig, and the procession was about to start for the mayor's office, when M. Alphonse put his hand to his forehead and whispered to me:

"What a fool I am! I have forgotten the ring! It is on the Venus's finger, the devil take her! For Heaven's sake, don't tell my mother. Perhaps she will not notice anything."

"You might send someone to get it," I said.

"No, no! my servant stayed at Ille, and I don't trust these people here. Twelve hundred francs' worth of diamonds! that might be too much of a temptation for more than one of them. Besides, what would they all think of my absent-mindedness? They would make too much fun of me. They would call me the statue's husband. —However, I trust that no one will steal it. Luckily, all my knaves are afraid of the idol. They don't dare go within arm's length of it.—Bah! it's no matter; I have another ring."

The two ceremonies, civil and religious, were performed with suitable pomp, and Mademoiselle de Puygarrig received a ring that formerly belonged to a milliner's girl at Paris, with no suspicion that her husband was bestowing upon her a pledge of love. Then we betook ourselves to the table, where we ate and drank, yes, and sang, all at great

length. I sympathized with the bride amid the vulgar merriment that burst forth all about her; however, she put a better face on it than I could have hoped, and her embarrassment was neither awkwardness nor affectation. It may be that courage comes of itself with difficult situations.

The breakfast came to an end when God willed; it was four o'clock; the men went out to walk in the park, which was magnificent, or watched the peasant girls of Puygarrig, dressed in their gala costumes, dance on the lawn in front of the château. In this way we passed several hours. Meanwhile the women were hovering eagerly about the bride, who showed them her wedding gifts. Then she changed her dress, and I observed that she had covered her lovely hair with a cap and a hat adorned with feathers; for there is nothing that wives are in such a hurry to do as to assume as soon as possible those articles of apparel which custom forbids them to wear when they are still unmarried.

It was nearly eight o'clock when we prepared to start for Ille. But before we started there was a pathetic scene. Mademoiselle de Puygarrig's aunt, who had taken the place of a mother to her, a woman of a very advanced age and very religious, was not to go to the town with us. At our departure, she delivered a touching sermon to her niece on her duties as a wife, the result of which was a torrent of tears, and embraces without end. M. de Peyrehorade compared this separation to the abduction of the Sabine women.

We started at last, however, and on the road we all exerted ourselves to the utmost to divert the bride and make her laugh; but it was all to no purpose.

At Ille supper awaited us, and such a supper! If the vulgar hilarity of the morning had disgusted me, I was fairly sickened by the equivocal remarks and jests which were aimed at the groom, and especially at the bride. M. Alphonse, who had disappeared a moment before taking his place at the table, was as pale as death and as solemn

as an iceberg. He kept drinking old Collioure wine, almost as strong as brandy. I was by his side and felt in duty bound to warn him.

"Take care! they say that this wine——"

I have no idea what foolish remark I made, to put myself in unison with the other guests.

He pressed my knee with his and said in a very low tone:

"When we leave the table, let me have a word with you."

His solemn tone surprised me. I looked at him more closely and noticed the extraordinary change in his expression.

"Are you feeling ill?" I asked him.

"No."

And he returned to his drinking.

Meanwhile, amid shouts and clapping of hands, a child of eleven years, who had slipped under the table, exhibited to the guests a dainty white and rose-coloured ribbon which he had taken from the bride's ankle. They called that her garter. It was immediately cut into pieces and distributed among the young men, who decorated their buttonholes with them, according to an ancient custom still observed in some patriarchal families. This episode caused the bride to blush to the whites of her eyes. But her confusion reached its height when M. de Peyrehorade, having called for silence, sang some Catalan verses, impromptu, so he said. Their meaning, so far as I understood it, was this:

"Pray, what is this, my friends? Does the wine I have drunk make me see double? There are two Venuses here——"

The bridegroom abruptly turned his head away with a terrified expression which made everybody laugh.

"Yes," continued M. de Peyrehorade, "there are two Venuses beneath my roof. One I found in the earth, like a truffle; the other, descended from the skies, has come to share her girdle with us."

He meant to say her garter.

" My son, choose whichever you prefer—the Roman or the Catalan Venus. The rascal chooses the Catalan, and his choice is wise. The Roman is black, the Catalan white. The Roman is cold, the Catalan inflames all who approach her."

This deliverance caused such an uproar, such noisy applause and such roars of laughter, that I thought that the ceiling would fall on our heads. There were only three sober faces at the table—those of the bride and groom, and my own. I had a terrible headache; and then, for some unknown reason, a wedding always depresses me. This one, in addition, disgusted me more or less.

The last couplets having been sung by the mayor's deputy—and they were very free, I must say—we went to the salon to make merry over the retirement of the bride, who was soon to be escorted to her chamber, for it was near midnight.

M. Alphonse led me into a window recess, and said to me, averting his eyes:

" You will laugh at me, but I don't know what the matter is with me; I am bewitched! the devil has got hold of me! "

The first idea that came to my mind was that he believed himself to be threatened by some misfortune of the sort of which Montaigne and Madame de Sévigné speak:

" The sway of love is always full of tragic episodes," etc.

" I supposed that accidents of that sort happened only to men of intellect," I said to myself.—" You have drunk too much Collioure wine, my dear Monsieur Alphonse," I said aloud. " I warned you."

" Yes, that may be. But there is something much more terrible than that."

He spoke in a halting voice. I concluded that he was downright tipsy.

" You remember my ring? " he continued, after a pause.

"Well! has it been stolen?"

"No."

"Then you have it?"

"No—I—I can't take it off that infernal Venus's finger!"

"Nonsense! you didn't pull hard enough."

"Yes, I did. But the Venus—she has bent her finger."

He looked me in the eye with a haggard expression, leaning against the window-frame to avoid falling.

"What a fable!" I said. "You pushed the ring on too far. To-morrow you can recover it with a pair of pincers. But take care that you don't injure the statue."

"No, I tell you. The Venus's finger is drawn in, bent; she has closed her hand—do you understand? She is my wife, apparently, as I have given her my ring. She refuses to give it back."

I felt a sudden shiver, and for a moment I was all goose-flesh. Then, as he heaved a profound sigh, he sent a puff of alcoholic fumes into my face, and all my emotion vanished.

"The wretch is completely drunk," I thought.

"You are an antiquary, monsieur," continued the bridegroom in a piteous tone; "you know all about these statues; perhaps there is some spring, some devilish contrivance that I don't know about. Suppose you were to go out and look?"

"Willingly," I said; "come with me."

"No, I prefer that you should go alone."

I left the salon.

The weather had changed while we were at supper, and the rain was beginning to fall violently. I was about to ask for an umbrella when a sudden reflection detained me. "I should be a great fool," I said to myself, "to take any trouble to verify what an intoxicated man tells me! Perhaps, too, he is trying to play some wretched joke on me, in order to give these worthy provincials something to laugh at; and the least that can happen to me is to be drenched to the skin and to catch a heavy cold."

I glanced from the door at the statue, which was dripping wet, and then went up to my room without returning to the salon. I went to bed, but sleep was a long while coming. All the scenes of the day passed through my mind. I thought of that lovely, pure maiden delivered to the tender mercies of a brutal sot. "What a hateful thing a *mariage de convenance* is!" I said to myself. "A mayor dons a tri-coloured scarf, a curé a stole, and lo! the most virtuous girl imaginable is abandoned to the Minotaur! Two persons who do not love each other—what can they have to say at such a moment, which two true lovers would purchase at the cost of their lives? Can a woman ever love a man whom she has once seen make a beast of himself? First impressions are not easily effaced, and I am sure that this Monsieur Alphonse well deserves to be detested."

During my monologue, which I have abridged very materially, I had heard much coming and going about the house, doors opening and closing, carriages driving away; then I fancied that I heard in the hall the light footsteps of several women walking towards the farther end of the corridor opposite my room. It was probably the procession of the bride, who was being escorted to her bedroom. Then I heard the steps go downstairs again. Madame de Peyrehorade's door closed.

"How perturbed and ill at ease that poor child must be," I thought.

I turned and twisted in my bed, in an execrable humour. A bachelor plays an absurd rôle in a house where a marriage is being celebrated.

Silence had reigned for some time, when it was broken by heavy steps ascending the staircase. The wooden stairs creaked loudly.

"What a brute!" I cried. "I'll wager that he will fall on the stairs!"

Everything became quiet once more. I took up a book in order to change the current of my thoughts. It was a

volume of departmental statistics, embellished by an article from the pen of M. de Peyrehorade on the druidical remains in the arrondissement of Prades. I dozed at the third page.

I slept badly and woke several times. It might have been five o'clock, and I had been awake more than twenty minutes, when a cock crew. Day was just breaking. Suddenly I heard the same heavy steps, the same creaking of the stairs that I had heard before I fell asleep. That struck me as peculiar. I tried, yawning sleepily, to divine why M. Alphonse should rise so early. I could imagine no probable cause. I was about to close my eyes again when my attention was once more attracted by a strange tramping, to which was soon added the jangling of bells and the noise of doors violently thrown open; then I distinguished confused outcries.

"My drunkard must have set fire to something!" I thought, as I leaped out of bed.

I dressed in hot haste and went out into the corridor. From the farther end came shrieks and lamentations, and one heartrending voice rose above all the rest: "My son! my son!" It was evident that something had happened to M. Alphonse. I ran to the bridal chamber; it was full of people. The first object that caught my eye was the young man, half dressed, lying across the bed, the framework of which was broken. He was livid and absolutely motionless. His mother was weeping and shrieking by his side. M. de Peyrehorade was bustling about, rubbing his temples with eau de Cologne, or holding salts to his nose. Alas! his son had been dead a long while.

On a couch, at the other end of the room, was the bride, in frightful convulsions. She was uttering incoherent cries, and two strong maidservants had all the difficulty in the world in holding her.

"Great God!" I cried, "what has happened?"

I walked to the bed and raised the unfortunate young

man's body; it was already cold and stiff. His clenched teeth and livid face expressed the most horrible anguish. It seemed perfectly evident that his death had been a violent one, and the death agony indescribably terrible. But there was no sign of blood on his clothes. I opened his shirt and found on his breast a purple mark which extended around the loins and across the back. One would have said that he had been squeezed by an iron ring. My foot came in contact with something hard on the carpet; I stooped and saw the diamond ring.

I dragged M. de Peyrehorade and his wife to their room; then I caused the bride to be taken thither.

"You still have a daughter," I said to them; "you owe to her your devoted care."

Then I left them alone.

It seemed to me to be beyond question that M. Alphonse had been the victim of a murder, the authors of which had found a way to introduce themselves into the bride's bedroom at night. The marks on the breast and their circular character puzzled me a good deal, however, for a club or an iron bar could not have produced them. Suddenly I remembered having heard that in Valencia the *bravi* used long leather bags filled with fine sand to murder people whom they were hired to kill. I instantly recalled the Aragonese muleteer and his threat; and yet I hardly dared think that he would have wreaked such a terrible vengeance for a trivial jest.

I walked about the house, looking everywhere for traces of a break, and finding nothing. I went down into the garden, to see whether the assassins might have forced their way in on that side of the house; but I found no definite indications. Indeed, the rain of the preceding night had so saturated the ground that it could not have retained any distinct impression. I observed, however, several very deep footprints; they pointed in two opposite directions, but in the same line, leading from the corner of the hedge next

the tennis court to the gateway of the house. They might well be M. Alphonse's steps when he went out to take his ring from the finger of the statue. On the other hand, the hedge was less dense at that point than elsewhere, and the murderers might have passed through it there. As I went back and forth in front of the statue, I paused a moment to look at it. That time, I will confess, I was unable to contemplate without terror its expression of devilish irony; and, with my head full of the horrible scenes I had witnessed, I fancied that I had before me an infernal divinity, exulting over the disaster that had stricken that house.

I returned to my room and remained there till noon. Then I went out and inquired concerning my hosts. They were a little calmer. Mademoiselle de Puygarrig—I should say M. Alphonse's widow—had recovered her senses. She had even talked with the king's attorney from Perpignan, then on circuit at Ille, and that magistrate had taken her deposition. He desired mine also. I told him what I knew and made no secret of my suspicions of the Aragonese muleteer. He ordered that he should be arrested immediately.

"Did you learn anything from Madame Alphonse?" I asked the king's attorney, when my deposition was written out and signed.

"That unfortunate young woman has gone mad," he replied, with a sad smile. "Mad! absolutely mad! This is what she told me:

"She had been in bed, she said, a few minutes, with the curtains drawn, when her bedroom door opened and someone came in. At that time Madame Alphonse was on the inside of the bed, with her face towards the wall. Supposing, of course, that it was her husband, she did not move. A moment later, the bed creaked as if under an enormous weight. She was terribly frightened, but dared not turn her head. Five minutes, ten minutes perhaps—she can only guess at the time—passed in this way. Then she made

an involuntary movement, or else the other person in the bed made one, and she felt the touch of something as cold as ice—that was her expression. She moved closer to the wall, trembling in every limb. Shortly after, the door opened a second time, and someone came in, who said: 'Good-evening, my little wife.' Soon the curtains were drawn aside. She heard a stifled cry. The person who was in the bed by her side sat up and seemed to put out its arms. Thereupon she turned her head, and saw, so she declares, her husband on his knees beside the bed, with his head on a level with the pillow, clasped in the arms of a sort of greenish giant, who was squeezing him with terrible force. She says—and she repeated it twenty times, poor woman!—she says that she recognized—can you guess whom?—the bronze Venus, M. de Peyrchorade's statue. Since she was unearthed, the whole neighbourhood dreams of her. But I continue the story of that unhappy mad woman. At that sight she lost consciousness, and it is probable that she had lost her reason some moments before. She could give me no idea at all how long she remained in her swoon. Recovering her senses, she saw the phantom, or, as she still insists, the statue, motionless, with its legs and the lower part of the body in the bed, the bust and arms stretched out, and in its arms her husband, also motionless. A cock crew. Thereupon the statue got out of bed, dropped the dead body, and left the room. Madame Alphonse rushed for the bell-cord, and you know the rest."

The Spaniard was arrested; he was calm, and defended himself with much self-possession and presence of mind. He did not deny making the remark I had overheard; but he explained it by saying that he had meant simply this: that, on the following day, having rested meanwhile, he would beat his victorious rival at tennis. I remember that he added:

"An Aragonese, when he is insulted, doesn't wait until the next day for his revenge. If I had thought that Monsieur

Alphonse intended to insult me, I would have driven my knife into his belly on the spot."

His shoes were compared with the footprints in the garden, and were found to be much larger.

Lastly, the innkeeper at whose house he was staying deposed that he had passed the whole night rubbing and doctoring one of his mules, which was sick. Furthermore, the Aragonese was a man of excellent reputation, well known in the province, where he came every year in the course of his business. So he was released with apologies.

I have forgotten the deposition of a servant, who was the last person to see M. Alphonse alive. It was just as he was going up to his wife; he called the man and asked him with evident anxiety if he knew where I was. The servant replied that he had not seen me. Thereupon M. Alphonse sighed and stood more than a minute without speaking; then he said:

"*Well! the devil must have taken him away too!*"

I asked him if M. Alphonse had his diamond ring on his finger when he spoke to him. The servant hesitated before he replied; at last he said that he did not think so, but that he had not noticed particularly.

"If he had had that ring on his finger," he added upon reflection, "I should certainly have noticed it, for I thought that he had given it to Madame Alphonse."

As I questioned this man, I was conscious of a touch of the superstitious terror with which Madame Alphonse's deposition had infected the whole household. The king's attorney glanced at me with a smile, and I did not persist.

Some hours after M. Alphonse's funeral, I prepared to leave Ille. M. de Peyrehorade's carriage was to take me to Perpignan. Despite his enfeebled condition, the poor old man insisted upon attending me to his garden gate. We passed through the garden in silence, he, hardly able to drag himself along, leaning on my arm. As we were about to part, I cast a last glance at the Venus. I foresaw

that my host, although he did not share the terror and detestation which she inspired in a portion of his family, would be glad to be rid of an object which would constantly remind him of a shocking calamity. It was my purpose to urge him to place it in some museum. I hesitated about opening the subject, when M. de Peyrehorade mechanically turned his head in the direction in which he saw that I was gazing earnestly. His eye fell upon the statue, and he instantly burst into tears. I embraced him, and, afraid to say a single word, entered the carriage.

I never learned, subsequent to my departure, that any new light had been thrown upon that mysterious catastrophe.

M. de Peyrehorade died a few months after his son. By his will he bequeathed to me his manuscripts, which I shall publish some day, perhaps. I found among them no memoir relating to the inscriptions on the Venus.

P.S.—My friend M. de P. has recently written me from Perpignan that the statue no longer exists. After her husband's death, Madame de Peyrehorade's first care was to have it melted into a bell, and in that new shape it is now used in the church at Ille.

"But," M. de P. adds, "it would seem that an evil fate pursues all those who possess that bronze. Since that bell has rung at Ille the vines have frozen twice."

(II)

THE ETRUSCAN VASE

Auguste Saint-Clair was not popular in what is called Society; principally because he only tried to please those who pleased him. He sought them out, and fled the others. Besides, he was absent-minded and indolent. One evening, as he was leaving the Théâtre Italien, the Marquise

A—— asked him how Mademoiselle Sontag had sung. "Yes, madame," replied Saint-Clair, smiling pleasantly and thinking of something quite different. It was impossible to attribute this ridiculous reply to timidity; for he spoke to a great lord, to a great man, or even to a fashionable woman with the same aplomb with which he would have entertained an equal. The Marquise decided that Saint-Clair was a prodigy of impertinence and stupidity.

Madame B—— asked him to dinner one Monday. She talked a great deal to him; and, as he left the house, he declared he had never met a more delightful woman. Now Madame B—— was in the habit of collecting wit for a month at other people's houses, and spending it at her own in a single evening. Saint-Clair saw her again on the Thursday of the same week. This time he was a little bored. A third visit decided him never to show himself again in her drawing-room. Madame B—— declared that Saint-Clair was a young man with no manners, and of the worst form.

He had been born with a tender and loving heart; but, at an age when impressions that last for a lifetime are too easily taken, his too expansive sensibility had made him the butt of his comrades. He was proud, ambitious; he held to his opinions with child-like tenacity. From that time he studied to hide all the outward signs of what he regarded as an unworthy weakness. He achieved his end; but his victory cost him dear. He could hide from others the feelings of his too sensitive soul, but in imprisoning them in himself he made them a hundred times more cruel. In Society he won the sad reputation of an indifferent and careless man; and in solitude his restless imagination made torments for him, the more frightful in that he would confide them to nobody.

It is true that it is difficult to find a friend. Difficult! Is it possible? Have two men existed who did not hide a secret from each other? Saint-Clair scarcely believed in

friendships, and the fact was obvious. The young people of Society found him cold and reserved. He never asked them for their secrets; and for them, all his thoughts and most of his actions were hidden in mystery. The French love to talk of themselves; so that Saint-Clair was, in spite of himself, the depository of plenty of confidences. His friends—and the word means the people he saw twice a week—complained of his distrust of them; it is a fact that the man who, unasked, shares his secret with us is usually offended if he does not learn our own. People think there should be reciprocity in indiscretion.

"He is buttoned up to the chin," said one day the handsome Major Alphonse de Thémines. "I could never put the slightest trust in that devil of a Saint-Clair."

"I think him something of a Jesuit," replied Jules Lambert. "Someone told me on his word of honour he had twice met him coming out of Saint-Sulpice. No one knows what he is thinking. I can never be at ease with him."

They separated. Alphonse met Saint-Clair on the Boulevard Italien walking along with bent head, blind to everybody. Alphonse stopped him, took him by the arm, and before they had reached the Rue de la Paix had told him the whole story of his amours with Madame ——, whose husband was so jealous and so brutal.

The same evening Jules Lambert lost his money at cards. He went and danced. While dancing he elbowed a man who, having also lost all his money, was in a very bad temper. The result was an exchange of words and arrangements for a meeting. Jules begged Saint-Clair to be his second, and on the same occasion borrowed money from him, which he has so far forgotten to repay.

After all, Saint-Clair was genial enough. His faults harmed nobody but himself. He was obliging, often delightful, scarcely ever a bore. He had travelled much, read much, and only spoke of his travel and reading when pressed. Besides, he was big and well made; his face was

noble and intellectual; it was almost always too grave, but his smile was open and full of kindness.

I was forgetting an important point. Saint-Clair was attentive to all women, and sought their conversation more than that of men. Did he love? It was difficult to say. Only, if love did touch this cold being, it was known that the pretty Countess Mathilde de Coursy was the woman he preferred. She was a young widow at whose house he was a regular visitor. There were the following data from which to conclude their intimacy: first, the almost ceremonious politeness of Saint-Clair towards the Countess, and vice versa; secondly, his foible of never pronouncing her name in public—or, if he were forced to speak of her, never with the slightest praise; thirdly, before Saint-Clair had been introduced to her, he had been a passionate lover of music, and the Countess had a similar fondness for painting. Since they had met their tastes had changed. Lastly, when the Countess had been at a watering-place the year before, Saint-Clair had set off six days after her.

* * * * * *

My duty as historian compels me to declare that one night in the month of July, a few minutes before dawn, the park gate of a country house opened, and a man came out with all the precautions of a thief afraid of being surprised. The country house belonged to Madame de Coursy, and the man was Saint-Clair. A woman wrapped in a pelisse accompanied him as far as the gate and leaned through it to see him the longer as he went off down the path under the park wall. Saint-Clair stopped, looked circumspectly about him, and made a sign with his hand for the woman to go in. In the brightness of the summer night he could distinguish her pale face still motionless in the same place. He retraced his step, came up to her, and took her tenderly in his arms. He wanted to make her promise to go in; but he had still a hundred things to say to her. Their talk had lasted ten minutes when they heard the voice of a peasant going out to

work in the fields. A kiss was taken and returned, the gate was closed, and Saint-Clair, with one bound, was at the end of the path.

He followed a road that seemed well known to him. Sometimes he almost leapt for joy, and ran, striking the bushes with his cane; sometimes he stopped or walked slowly, looking at the sky, tinting now with purple in the east. Indeed anyone who had seen him would have taken him for a lunatic delighted to have broken from his cage. After half an hour's walk he was at the door of a lonely little house he had rented for the season. He unlocked the door and went in, threw himself on a big sofa, and there, with eyes fixed and lips curved in a gentle smile, gave himself up to thoughts and day-dreams. His imagination brought him none but ideas of happiness. "How happy I am!" he kept saying to himself every moment. "At last I have met a heart that understands my own. . . . Yes, I have found my ideal. . . . I have at the same time a friend and a mistress . . . What character! . . . What passion of soul! . . . No, she has loved no one before me. . . ." Soon, since vanity slips always into the affairs of this world, "She is the most beautiful woman in Paris," he thought. And his imagination went over all charms at once. "She has chosen me from all. . . . She had the flower of Society for admirers. That Colonel of Hussars, so handsome, so brave—and not too much of a fop . . . that young author who makes such pretty water-colours, and plays 'proverbs' so well . . . that Russian Lovelace who was through the Balkan campaign and served under Diébitch . . . above all, Camille T——, with his undoubted wit, his fine manners, and a handsome Sabre-cut on his forehead . . . she has shown the door to the lot of them. And I . . . !" Then came his refrain: "How happy I am! How happy I am!" And he got up and opened the window, unable to breathe; alternately he walked up and down, and tossed upon his sofa.

Happy and unhappy lovers are almost equally dull. One of my friends, who was often in one or other case, found no other way of getting a listener than to give me an excellent luncheon, during which he was free to talk of his loves; but it was an absolute condition that the conversation should be changed after the coffee.

Since I cannot give a lunch to all my readers, I will spare them the amorous musings of Saint-Clair. Besides, one cannot live for ever in the clouds. Saint-Clair was tired; he yawned, stretched his arms, and saw that it was full daylight; he had to think of sleeping. When he woke, he saw from his watch that he had scarcely time to dress and run up to Paris, where he had been invited to a luncheon-dinner with several young fellows of his acquaintance.

* * * * * *

Another bottle of champagne had just been uncorked; I leave the reader to decide how many had already been drunk. Let it suffice him to know that the moment had arrived, which comes pretty early at a bachelor luncheon, when everybody wants to speak at the same time, and when the strong heads begin to grow anxious about the weak.

"I wish," said Alphonse de Thémines, who never lost an opportunity of speaking of England, "I wish it were the fashion in Paris, as in London, for each man to call a toast to his mistress. In that way we should really know whose are the sighs of our friend Saint-Clair." As he spoke he filled his own glass and those of his neighbours.

Saint-Clair, a little embarrassed, was about to reply; but Jules Lambert was before him.

"I strongly approve of the custom," said he, "and I adopt it." He raised his glass: "To all the milliners of Paris! I except only those over thirty, the one-eyed, the one-legged, etc."

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" shouted the young Anglophiles.

Saint-Clair stood up, his glass in his hand.

"Gentlemen," he said, "my heart is not so comprehensive

as that of our friend Jules, but it is more constant. And there is the more merit in my constancy in that I have been separated for a long time from the lady of my thoughts. I am sure you will approve my choice, even if you are not already my rivals. To Judith Pasta, gentlemen! May we soon see once again the first tragédienne of Europe!"

Thémines wanted to object to this toast, but the applause prevented him. Saint-Clair, having parried the thrust, thought himself quit of the business for the day.

The talk turned on the theatre. Dramatic criticism served as a means of transition to politics. From the Duke of Wellington they passed to English horses, and, from English horses to women, by a chain of ideas easy to follow, since young men find, first a fine horse, and secondly a pretty mistress the two possessions most to be desired.

Then they discussed the method of obtaining these desirable objects. Horses are bought, and one also buys women; but we do not speak of that kind. Saint-Clair, after modestly pleading his lack of experience in the delicate subject, observed that the first step towards pleasing a woman was to be singular, and different from the others. But was there a general formula for singularity? He did not think so.

"According to your view," said Jules, "a lame man or a hunchback is more likely to please than a straight fellow built like anybody else?"

"You push things rather far," Saint-Clair replied; "but I accept, if necessary, all the consequences of my proposition. For instance, if I were a hunchback I should not blow my brains out, and I should decide to make conquests. In the first place, I should pay my addresses to two kinds of women only, to those of a real sensibility, or to those, and there are plenty of them, who pretend to an original character, eccentrics, as they say in England. I should paint for the former the horror of my position, the cruelty of nature towards me; I should try to set them pitying my lot,

and contrive to let them suspect me capable of a passionate love. I should kill a rival in a duel, and poison myself with a feeble dose of laudanum. After a few months they would no longer notice my hump, and then it would be my business to watch for the first access to tenderness. As to the women who pretend to originality, their conquest is easy. You have only to persuade them that it is a firmly established rule that no hunchback can have a love affair, and they will be instantly anxious to prove it by an exception."

"What a Don Juan!" cried Jules.

"Let us break our legs, gentlemen," said Colonel Beaujeu, "since we have the ill luck not to be born with hump backs!"

"I agree absolutely with Saint-Clair," said Hector Roquantin, who was only three and a half feet high. "One sees every day the most beautiful and fashionable women giving themselves to men whom you fine fellows would never suspect."

"Hector, get up, I beg you, and ring for wine," said Thémines with the most natural air imaginable.

The dwarf rose, and everyone smiled, remembering the fable of the fox who had lost his tail.

"As for me," said Thémines, taking up the conversation, "the longer I live, the clearer I see that passable looks," and he threw a complacent glance in the mirror that was opposite him, "passable looks, and taste in dress, make the great singularity that conquers the most cruel"; and he flipped a breadcrumb from the lapel of his coat.

"Bah!" cried the dwarf, "a handsome face and clothes by Staub win you the women you keep for eight days and are bored by at the second meeting. But for love, for what is called love, something else is needed. . . . You want——"

"See here," interrupted Thémines, "would you like a decisive example? You all knew Massigny, and you know what sort of a man he was. The manners of an English stable-boy and the conversation of his horse. But he was as handsome as Adonis, and wore his cravat like Brummel.

Taking him altogether he was the biggest bore I have ever known."

"He tried to kill me with dulness," said Colonel Beaujeu. "Imagine: I had to travel two hundred leagues with him."

"Did you know," asked Saint-Clair, "that he caused the death of that poor Richard Thornton whom you knew?

"But surely," replied Jules, "he was killed by brigands near Fondi?"

"Certainly; but you shall see that Massigny was at least an accomplice in the crime. Several travellers, Thornton among them, had arranged to go to Naples, all together, for fear of the brigands. Massigny wanted to join the party. As soon as Thornton knew it, he went on, for horror, I suppose, at the idea of having to spend some days with him. He set out alone, and you know the rest."

"Thornton was right," said Thémines; "of two deaths he chose the easier. Anyone would have done the same in his place." He paused, and continued: "You grant me then that Massigny was the most tedious man on earth?"

"Granted!" There was a shout of exclamation.

"Let us not reduce anybody to despair," said Jules; "let us make an exception of . . . especially when he is expounding his political plans."

"You will also grant me," pursued Thémines, "that Madame de Coursy is a woman of brains if ever there was one."

There was a moment's silence. Saint-Clair bent his head, and thought all eyes were upon him.

"Who questions it?" he said at last, still leaning over his plate, apparently examining with great interest the flowers painted on the porcelain.

"I maintain," said Jules, raising his voice, "I maintain that she is one of the three most delightful women in Paris."

"I knew her husband," said the Colonel. "He often showed me charming letters from his wife."

"Auguste," put in Hector Roquantin, "you must introduce me to the Countess. They say you count for something there."

"At the end of the autumn," murmured Saint-Clair, "when she comes back to Paris . . . I . . . I think she does not entertain in the country."

"Will you listen to me?" cried Thémines.

There was silence again. Saint-Clair fidgeted on his chair like a prisoner in a court of justice.

"You had not seen the Countess three years ago, Saint-Clair; you were in Germany," Alphonse de Thémines went on with relentless calm. "You can have no idea of what she was in those days; beautiful, fresh as a rose, lively too, and gay as a butterfly. Well, among her numerous, admirers, who do you think was honoured with her favour? Massigny! The stupidest of men, and the dullest, turned the head of the cleverest of women. Do you think a hunchback could have done so much? No, believe me, have a handsome face and a good tailor, and be bold."

Saint-Clair was in an atrocious position. He was going to give the narrator a formal contradiction; but fear of compromising the Countess held him back. He would have liked to say something in her favour; but his tongue was frozen. His lips trembled with rage, and he searched his head in vain for some roundabout means of starting a quarrel.

"What!" cried Jules with surprise, "Madame de Coursy gave herself to Massigny! Frailty, thy name is woman!"

"The reputation of a woman is a thing of such small importance!" said Saint-Clair, in a dry, scornful voice. "One may pull it to pieces to make a little sport, and——"

As he spoke, he remembered with horror a certain Etruscan vase that he had seen a hundred times on the Countess's mantelpiece in Paris. He knew it had been a present from Massigny on his return from Italy; and, damning circumstance! the vase had been brought from

Paris to the country. Every evening, when she took off her bouquet, Mathilde placed it in the Etruscan vase.

The words died on his lips: he saw no longer but one thing, thought no longer but of one thing—the Etruscan vase.

"A fine proof!" a critic will say. "To think of suspecting one's mistress for so small a thing as that!"

Have you been in love, Master Critic?

Thémines was in too good a temper to be offended at Saint-Clair's tone.

He replied lightly with an air of good fellowship:

"I only repeat what the world said. It was taken as truth while you were in Germany. But I scarcely know Madame de Coursy; it is eighteen months since I went to her house. It is possible that people were mistaken, and that Massigny was telling me a yarn. To return to what we are considering: I should be none the less right even if the example I have just quoted should prove to be false. You all know that France's most brilliant woman, she whose works——"

The door opened, Théodore Neville came in. He had just returned from Egypt.

"Théodore! Back so soon!" He was overwhelmed with questions.

"Have you brought back a real Turkish costume?" asked Thémines. "Have you an Arab horse and an Egyptian groom?"

"What sort of a man is the Pasha?" asked Jules. "When will he make himself independent? Have you seen heads cut off with single sabre blows?"

"And the dancing girls!" said Roquantin. "Are Cairo women beautiful?"

"Did you see General L——?" asked Colonel Beaujeu. "How has he organized the Pasha's army? Did Colonel C—— give you a sword for me?"

"And the Pyramids. And the cataracts of the Nile? And the statue of Memnon? Ibrahim Pasha? etc." All

spoke at once; Saint-Clair thought of nothing but the Etruscan vase.

Théodore seated himself cross-legged, for he had taken to the habit in Egypt and had not been able to lose it in France, waited till the questioners had tired themselves out, and spoke as follows, so fast as not to be easily interrupted:

"The Pyramids! I tell you they are a regular humbug. They are not nearly as high as one thinks. The Minster at Strasbourg is only four metres lower. I am full up with antiquities. Don't speak of them. The mere sight of a hieroglyph would make me faint. There are so many travellers who busy themselves with these things! My object was to study the appearances and manners of all that bizarre crowd that fills the streets of Alexandria and Cairo —Turks, Bedouins, Copts, Fellahs, Megrabis. I made some hurried notes when I was in quarantine. What an infamy that is! I hope none of you believe in contagion. As for me, I calmly smoked my pipe in the midst of three hundred plague-stricken people. Ah! Colonel, you would see some fine cavalry there, well mounted. I will show you some superb weapons I brought back. I have a djerid that belonged to the famous Monrad Bey. Colonel, I have a yataghan for you, and a khandjar for Auguste. You shall see my metchla, my burnous, my haïck. Do you know, I could have brought some women back if I had wanted. Ibrahim Pasha sent so many from Greece, that they are to be had for the asking . . . but on account of my mother. . . . I talked a lot with the Pasha. He is a clever man, my word, and no bigot. You would scarcely believe how learned he is in our affairs. I tell you he knows of the slightest mysteries of our Cabinet. I drew from his conversation the most precious information as to the state of the parties in France. . . . At present he is much busied with statistics. He subscribes to all our newspapers. Do you know, he is a determined Bonapartist! He talks of nothing but Napoleon. 'Ah,' he said to me, 'what a

great man was Bounabardo!' Bounabardo, that is their name for Bonaparte."

"Giourdina, that is to say, Jordan," murmured Thémines beneath his breath.

"At first," Théodore went on, "Mahammed Ali was very reserved with me. You know all Turks are very mistrustful. He took me for a spy, damme! or a Jesuit. He has a horror of Jesuits. But, after a visit or two, he saw that I was a traveller, unprejudiced, and curious to learn on the spot the customs, manners and politics of the Orient. Then he unbent, and spoke to me with an open heart. At my last audience, which was the third he gave me, I took the liberty of saying, 'I do not understand why your Highness does not make yourself independent of the Porte.' 'My God,' said he, 'I should like to; but I am afraid that the Liberal papers, which govern everything in your country, would not support me when once I had proclaimed the independence of Egypt.' He is a handsome old man, with a fine white beard and never a laugh. He gave me some excellent preserves; but of all I gave him, what pleased him most was the collection of uniforms of the Imperial Guard, by Charlet."

"Is the Pasha romantic?" asked Thémines.

"He bothers himself little with books; but you know that Arabian literature is wholly romantic. They have a poet called Malek Ayatalnefous-Ebn-Esraf, who recently published some Meditations beside which those of Lamartine would seem to be classical prose. On my arrival in Cairo I hired a teacher of Arabic, with whom I set myself to read the Koran. Although I had only a few lessons I learned enough to understand the sublime beauties of the Prophet's style, and realize how bad are all our translations. Look, would you like to see Arabic writing? This word in gold letters is Allah, that is to say, God."

He showed as he spoke a very dirty letter that he had taken from a purse of perfumed silk.

" How long did you stay in Egypt? " asked Thémines.

" Six weeks."

And the traveller went on describing everything, from cedar to hyssop.

Saint-Clair went out almost immediately after his arrival, and took the road to his country house. The impetuous gallop of his horse prevented him from following out his ideas. But he knew vaguely that his happiness in this world had been destroyed for ever, and that he could blame nothing for it but a dead man and an Etruscan vase.

Arriving home, he threw himself on the sofa where, the night before, he had made that lingering and delicious analysis of his happiness. The idea he had most lovingly caressed had been that his mistress was not a woman like another, that she had not loved, and could never love, but him alone. And now this beautiful dream disappeared before the mournful, cruel reality. " I possess a fine woman; that is all. She is clever. Then she is the more to blame for being able to love Massigny! . . . It is true, she loves me now . . . with all her soul . . . as she can love. To be loved like Massigny! . . . She has submitted to my attentions, my whims, my importunities. But I have been mistaken. There was no sympathy between our hearts. Massigny or me, it is all one to her. He is handsome, she loves him for his good looks. I sometimes amuse her. ' Well, we will love Saint-Clair,' she says to herself, ' since the other is dead. And if Saint-Clair dies, or grows wearisome, we shall see.' " I firmly believe the devil watches invisible by an unhappy wretch so torturing himself. It is an amusing sight for the enemy of mankind, and when the victim feels his wounds are closing, Satan is there to open them again.

Saint-Clair thought he heard a voice that murmured in his ears:

" . . . L'honneur singulier
D'être le successeur. . . ."

He sat up and looked wildly about him. How happy he would have been to find someone in his room. He would undoubtedly have torn him to pieces.

The clock struck eight. The Countess expected him at half-past. What if he were to miss the appointment! "Indeed, why see Massigny's mistress again?" He lay down on the sofa and closed his eyes. "I want to sleep," he said. He lay still for half a minute, and then jumped to his feet and ran to the clock to see how the time was going. "How I wish it were half-past eight," he thought, "then it would be too late to set out." In his heart he did not feel he had the courage to stay at home; he wanted a pretext. He would have been glad to be very ill. He walked up and down in his room, sat down, took a book, but could not read a syllable. He set himself before his piano, and had not the energy to open it. He whistled, looked at the clouds, and wanted to count the poplars before his windows. Finally, he returned to consult the clock, and saw that he had succeeded in passing three minutes. "I cannot help loving her," he said, grinding his teeth and stamping his foot. "She rules me, and I am her slave, as Massigny was before me. Ah, well, wretched fellow, obey, since you have not the heart to break a chain you hate!"

He took his hat and went hurriedly out. When we are carried away by a passion we find some consolation for our self-esteem in contemplating our weakness from the height of our pride. "It is true, I am feeble," one says; "but if I wished!"

He went leisurely up the path that led to the park gate, and from a long way off saw a white figure that showed against the deep colour of the trees. She fluttered a handkerchief in her hand, as if to signal to him. His heart beat violently, and his knees trembled; he had not the strength to speak, and had become so timid that he feared lest the Countess should read his ill-humour in his face.

He took the hand she offered him, kissed her forehead,

because she threw herself in his arms, and followed her to her rooms, mute, stifling with difficulty the sighs that seemed ready to burst his chest.

A single candle lit the Countess's boudoir. They sat down. Saint-Clair noticed his friend's coiffure; a single rose in her hair. He had brought her the day before a fine English engraving, after Lesly's "Duchess of Portland" (her hair is dressed in this way), and had said but these words, "I like that simple rose better than all your elaborate coiffures." He did not like jewellery, and thought like that Lord who brutally said: "With decked-out women and caparisoned horses, the devil himself would have nothing to do."

Last night playing with a pearl necklace belonging to the Countess (for he always wanted something in his hands while talking), he had said: "Jewels are only good to hide defects. You, Mathilde, are too pretty to wear them." This evening the Countess, who remembered his lightest words, had put off rings, necklaces, earrings and bracelets. He noticed footgear first in a woman's dress, and, like many men, he was a little mad on this point. A heavy shower had fallen before sundown. The grass was still drenched; yet the Countess had walked across the wet lawn in silk stockings and black satin slippers. . . . What if she were to be ill? "She loves me," said Saint-Clair to himself.

And he sighed over his folly, and looked at Mathilde, smiling in spite of himself, divided between his ill-humour and the pleasure of seeing a pretty woman trying to please him by all those little nothings that lovers hold so valuable.

As for the Countess, her radiant face expressed a mixture of love and playful mischief that made her still more lovable. She took something that was in a Japanese lacquer box, and offering her little hand closed, hiding the thing it held.

"The other evening," she said, "I broke your watch. Here it is, mended."

She gave him the watch, and looked at him, tenderly,

mischievously, biting her lower lip, as if to keep from laughing. Great God, but how beautiful her teeth were! How they shone white on the vivid red of her lips! (A man looks very foolish when he takes coldly a pretty woman's coaxings.)

Saint-Clair thanked her, took the watch, and was going to put it into his pocket.

"Look now," she went on, "open it, and see if it is properly mended. You who are so learned, and have been to the Polytechnic School, ought to see that."

"I did not learn very much there," said Saint-Clair, and he absently opened the watch-case.

What was his surprise! A miniature portrait of Madame de Coursy had been painted on the inside of the case. How could he sulk further? His forehead lightened. He thought no more of Massigny; he remembered only that he was with a charming woman and that this woman adored him.

* * * * * *

"The lark, that harbinger of dawn," began to sing, and long strips of pale light furrowed the eastern clouds. It was the hour when Romeo said farewell to Juliet; the classic parting hour of lovers.

Saint-Clair was standing by a mantelpiece, the key of the park in his hand, his eyes fixed attentively on the Etruscan vase of which we have already spoken. He still felt spiteful towards it in the bottom of his heart. But he was in a good humour, and the very simple idea that Thémines might have lied began to come into his head. While the Countess, who meant to accompany him as far as the park gate, was wrapping a shawl round her head, he lightly struck the odious vase with the key, gradually increasing the force of the blows until it seemed likely he would soom be making it fly to pieces.

"Oh! Take care! Take care!" cried Mathilde, "you are going to break my beautiful Etruscan vase!" And she snatched the key from his hands.

Saint-Clair was very dissatisfied, but patient. He turned his back on the mantelpiece so as not to succumb to the temptation, and, opening his watch, set himself to examine the portrait he had just been given.

"Who is the painter?" he asked.

"Monsieur R——; Massigny introduced him to me." (Massigny discovered after his journey to Rome that he had an exquisite taste for the fine arts, and became the Mæcenas of all the young artists.) "Really, I think the portrait is like me though a little flattering."

Saint-Clair would have liked to hurl the watch against the wall, which would have made mending a difficult matter. He restrained himself, however, and put it in his pocket; then observing that it was already day, he begged Mathilde not to accompany him, crossed the park with long strides, and in a moment was alone in the fields.

"Massigny! Massigny!" he cried, with concentrated rage, "shall I always be meeting you! . . . Doubtless the painter who made the portrait, painted another of Massigny! . . . Fool that I was! I believed for a moment that I was loved with a passion like my own . . . and that because she dresses her hair with a rose, and wears no jewels! . . . She has a cabinet full of them. . . . Massigny, who only saw the dress of women was so fond of jewels! Yes, she is good-natured, it must be admitted. She knows how to accommodate herself to the tastes of her lovers. Curse! I would a hundred times rather she were a courtesan and sold herself for money. Then at least I should be able to believe that she loves me, since she is my mistress, and I do not pay her."

Presently a still more painful idea occurred to him. In a few weeks the Countess would be out of mourning. Saint-Clair was to marry her as soon as her year of widowhood should be over. He had promised. Promised? No. He had never spoken of it. But that had been his intention, and the Countess had known it. For him, that was as good

as an oath. Yesterday he would have given a throne to hasten the moment when he should be able publicly to acknowledge his affection; now, he trembled at the bare idea of uniting his lot with that of Massigny's old mistress.

"And yet I owe it to her," he said, "and it shall be. No doubt she thought, poor woman, that I knew of her old intrigue. They say it was public property. And then, too, she does not know me. . . . She cannot understand me. She thinks I only love her as Massigny loved her."

Then, not without pride he said: "For three months she has made me the happiest of men. That happiness is well worth the sacrifice of my whole life."

He did not go to bed, but rode all the morning in the woods. In a pathway of the wood Verrières he saw a man on a fine English horse who called him by name from a distance and came straight up to him. It was Alphonse de Thémines. To one in Saint-Clair's state of mind solitude was particularly desirable; and the meeting with Thémines turned his ill-humour into choking rage. Thémines either did not notice it, or else took a roguish pleasure in provoking him. He talked, laughed and joked, without noticing that he met with no response. Saint-Clair, seeing a narrow byway, instantly turned his horse into it, hoping the tormentor would not follow him; but he was mistaken; tormentors do not so readily leave their prey. Thémines turned, and quickened his pace to draw level with Saint-Clair, and to go on more comfortably with the conversation.

I said the byway was narrow. The horses could scarcely walk abreast; it was not surprising that Thémines, excellent horseman as he was, should graze Saint-Clair's feet in passing beside him. Saint-Clair, whose rage had reached its utmost limit, could no longer control himself. He rose in his stirrups and smartly switched Thémines' horse over the nose.

"What the devil is the matter with you, Auguste?" shouted Thémines. "Why do you hit my horse?"

"Why do you follow me?" replied Saint-Clair in a terrible voice.

"Are you out of your senses, Saint-Clair? Do you forget that you are talking to me?"

"I know very well I am talking to a coxcomb."

"Saint-Clair! . . . I think you are mad. . . . Listen: to-morrow you will apologize to me or pay for your impertinence."

"Till to-morrow, then, sir."

Thémines pulled up his horse; Saint-Clair urged his, and soon disappeared in the wood.

At that moment he felt calmer. He had the weakness of believing in presentiments. He thought he would be killed next morning, and that that was a proper solution of his difficulty. One more day to spend; to-morrow no more anxieties, no more torments. He went home, sent his servant with a note to Colonel Beaujeu, wrote some letters, then dined with a good appetite, and punctually at half-past eight was at the little gate of the park.

"What is the matter with you to-day, Auguste?" said the Countess. "You are strangely gay, and yet, with all your jokes, you cannot make me laugh. Yesterday you were just a little dull, and I, I was gay. To-day we have changed parts. . . . I have a frightful headache."

"Dearest, I admit it; yes, I was very tedious yesterday. But to-day I have had fresh air, and exercise; I am marvellously well."

"As for me, I got up late; I slept on this morning, and had tiresome dreams."

"Ah! Dreams? Do you believe in dreams?"

"What folly!"

"I believe in them: I guess you had a dream announcing some tragic event."

"Heavens! I never remember my dreams. However, I recollect. . . . I saw Massigny in my dream; so you see it was nothing very amusing."

"Massigny! I should have thought, on the contrary, you would have been delighted to see him again."

"Poor Massigny!"

"Poor Massigny?"

"Auguste, tell me, I beg of you, what is the matter with you to-night? There is something fiendish in your smile. You look as if you were laughing at yourself."

"Ah! Now you are treating me as badly as the old dowagers treat me, your friends."

"Yes, Auguste, to-day you are wearing the expression you have with people you do not like."

"Naughty one! Come, give me your hand."

He kissed her with ironic gallantry, and they looked steadfastly at each other for a minute. Saint-Clair lowered his eyes first, and cried:

"How difficult it is to live in this world without getting a reputation for wickedness. . . . One would have to talk of nothing but the weather, or sport, or else discuss with your old friends the reports of their charitable committees."

He took a paper from the table.

"See here is your laundress' bill. Let us talk of this, my angel, and then you will not say I am wicked."

"Really, Auguste you astonish me——"

"This spelling reminds me of a letter I found this morning. I must tell you that I set my papers in order, for I am tidy now and again. And so I came across a love-letter from a dressmaker, with whom I was in love when I was sixteen. She had her own way of writing each word, and always the most complicated. Her style is worthy of her spelling. Well, since in those days I was something of a coxcomb, I did not think it suited my dignity to have a mistress who could not write like a Sévigné. I left her abruptly. To-day, re-reading the letter, I perceived that this dressmaker must have been very much in love with me."

"Indeed, a woman whom you kept?"

"In great magnificence: on fifty francs a month. But

my guardian did not make me too generous an allowance, for he used to say that a young man with money ruins himself, and ruins others."

"And the woman? What became of her?"

"How do I know? She probably died in a hospital."

"Auguste! . . . If that were so you would not speak so carelessly."

"If you must know the truth, she married a respectable man; and I gave her a little dowry when I came of age."

"How good you are! . . . But why do you like to seem wicked?"

"Oh, yes, I am very good. . . . The more I think of it, the more I am persuaded that this woman really loved me. . . . But in those days I did not know how to distinguish a true feeling under a ridiculous form."

"You should have brought me your letter. I should not have been jealous. We women have more intuition than you, and we see at once from the style of a letter whether the author is speaking honestly or is pretending a passion he does not feel."

"And yet, how often you let yourselves be duped by fools and coxcombs!"

As he spoke he was looking at the Etruscan vase, and his eyes and voice had a sinister expression that Mathilde did not notice.

"Come now! You men, you all want to pass as Don Juans. You imagine you are making dupes when often you are only meeting Dona Juana, still wilier than yourselves."

"I understand that, with your fine intellects, you ladies tell a fool a league away. At the same time, I have no doubt that our friend Massigny, a fool and a coxcomb, died blameless and a martyr."

"Massigny? He was not too much of a fool; and then, there are foolish women. I must tell you a story about Massigny. . . . But, tell me, have I not told you it before?"

" Never," replied Saint-Clair in a trembling voice.

" Massigny fell in love with me on his return from Italy. My husband knew him, and introduced him to me as a man of wit and taste. They were made for each other. Massigny was very attentive from the first; he gave me, as his own, water-colours he had bought at Schroth's, and talked music and painting to me with a tone of the most diverting superiority. One day he sent me an amazing letter. He told me, among other things, that I was the most respectable woman in Paris; for which reason he wanted to be my lover. I showed the letter to my cousin Julie. We were both mad in those days, and we resolved to play him a trick. One evening we had some visitors, among others Massigny. My cousin said to me: ' I am going to read you a declaration of love I received this morning.' She took the letter and read it amidst bursts of laughter. . . . Poor Massigny! "

Saint-Clair fell on his knees with a cry of joy. He seized the Countess's hand and covered it with kisses and tears. Mathilde was surprised to the last degree, and thought at first that he was ill. Saint-Clair could say nothing but " Forgive me! Forgive me! " At last he rose. He was radiant. At that moment he was happier than on the day when for the first time, Mathilde had said to him, " I love you."

" I am the most idiotic and most culpable of men," he cried; " for the last two days I have suspected you . . . and I did not ask you for an explanation——"

" You suspected me! . . . And of what? "

" I am a wretch! . . . They told me that you had loved Massigny, and——"

" Massigny! " and she began to laugh; then, becoming instantly grave again, " Auguste," she said, " you can be mad enough to have such suspicions, and hypocrite enough to hide them from me! "

There were tears in her eyes.

" I implore you, forgive me."

"How should I not forgive you, dearest? But first let me swear to you——"

"Oh! I believe you, I believe you. Tell me nothing."

"But in Heaven's name, what motive could make you suspect such an improbability?"

"Nothing, nothing at all but my cursed head . . . and . . . you see, that Etruscan vase that I knew Massigny had given you."

The Countess clasped her hands with astonishment; then laughing aloud she cried: "My Etruscan vase! My Etruscan vase!"

Saint-Clair could not help laughing himself, while big tears ran down his cheeks. He seized Mathilde in his arms and said:

"I will not loose you till you have forgiven me."

"Yes, I forgive you, madman that you are!" said she, kissing him tenderly. "You make me very happy to-day: this is the first time I have seen you weep, and I believed you had no tears."

Then, escaping from his arms, she seized the Etruscan vase and broke it in a thousand pieces on the floor. (It was a rare and irreplaceable specimen. There was a painting on it in three colours of a fight between Lapithe and a Centaur.)

For some hours Saint-Clair was the most ashamed of men, and the happiest.

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"Well," said Roquantin to Colonel Beaujeu, whom he met in the evening at Tortoni's, "the news is true?"

"Too true, my friend," replied the Colonel sadly.

"Tell me how it happened."

"Oh! Very properly. Saint-Clair began by telling me he was in the wrong, but that he wished to draw Thémines' fire before apologizing. I could but think he was right. Thémines wished it decided by lot who should fire first. Saint-Clair demanded that it should be Thémines. Thémines

fired: I saw Saint-Clair turn round where he stood, and fall stone dead. I have noticed before in many soldiers struck by a bullet this strange twisting round before death."

"It is very odd," said Roquantin. "And what did Thémines do?"

"Oh! What must be done on such occasions. He threw his pistol on the ground with an air of regret. He threw it with such force that he smashed the hammer. It was an English pistol, by Manton: I doubt if there is a gunsmith in Paris who could make him another."

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The Countess saw nobody for three years; winter and summer alike she stayed in her country house, scarcely leaving her room, and waited on by a mulatto woman who knew of her relations with Saint-Clair, and to whom she did not say two words a day. At the end of three years her cousin Julie came back from a long journey; she forced her way in, and found poor Mathilde so thin and pale that she thought she was looking on the corpse of the woman she had left beautiful and full of life. She succeeded with difficulty in drawing her from her retreat, and in taking her to Hyères. The Countess languished there for three or four months, and then died of a consumption caused by domestic trouble; so Doctor M—— said, who attended her.

GERARD DE NERVAL

(1805–1857)

***

SYLVIE

(Translated by Henry Roche)

I

A MISSPENT NIGHT

I was leaving the theatre where I used to appear every evening in a stage-box, smartly dressed for the wooer's part. Sometimes the place was full, at others empty. Little did I mind if I looked upon a pit occupied by about thirty unwilling applauders and upon boxes displaying only old-fashioned caps and dresses, or whether I was one of a lively, quivering house whose tiers were bright with flowery toilettes, glittering jewels and radiant faces. Indifferent as I was with regard to the public, the play only drew my attention when, at the second or third scene of some insipid masterpiece of the day, a well-known star lit up the empty stage, reanimating by a simple sigh or word the apathetic faces that surrounded me. In her I felt that I lived and that she lived for me alone. Her smile filled me with infinite rapture; the vibration of her sweet voice made me tremble with joy and love. I thought her endowed with every perfection; she was equal to all my enthusiasm, satisfying even my capricious moods—as beautiful as day when the footlights cast their beams on her from below, pale as the night when the screened lights left her bathed in the beams that fell from the chandelier, and showed her more like herself, her beauty alone shining in the shade, as the divine Hours and stars in their foreheads stand out clearly against the dark background of the frescoes at Herculaneum!

For a whole year I had not thought of inquiring what she was off the stage, fearing to tarnish the magic mirror that reflected her image. I had not done more than listen to some allusions concerning, not the actress, but the woman. I inquired as little about her as about what was said of the Princess of Elis or the Queen of Trebizond—an uncle of mine who had lived towards the latter years of the eighteenth century, as he must have lived to understand the times, having warned me in my youth that actresses were not women and that nature had forgotten to give them a heart. No doubt he spoke of them as they were then; but he had told me so many stories about his illusions and deceptions, and shown me so many miniatures on ivory, charming medallions which he then used to adorn snuff-boxes, so many love-letters turned yellow, so many faded favours with all their history and their conclusion, that I had got into my head all these women were unworthy, not taking into account how times had changed.

We were passing through a strange period, as are the times that follow revolutions or the downfall of great kingdoms. Gone was the heroic gallantry of the Fronde, gone the elegant and showy vice of the Régence, the scepticism and mad orgies of the Directoire; there now reigned an affectation of activity, hesitation and idleness, of brilliant utopias, of philosophical or religious aspirations, of vague enthusiasm, mixed with certain instincts of renovation, with a bored remembrance of past discord, with hopes not too secure; it was like the period of Peregrinus or Apuleius. The matter-of-fact man yearned for the bouquet of roses offered by the hand of lovely Isis, which would regenerate him: the goddess, eternally young and pure, appeared to us in the night and made us ashamed of hours misspent during the day. Ambition was not, however, congenial to our years and the eagerness displayed in the hunt for position and honours kept us aloof from possible spheres of activity. We could only find refuge in the poet's ivory

tower, where we continually ascended higher to live away from the crowd. On the summits our masters had led us up to, we at least breathed the pure air of the lonely heights, drank oblivion in the golden cup of legendary lore, and were inebriated with poetry and love. Love, alas! vague forms, rosy and blue tints, metaphysical phantoms! A real woman, when known, revolted our candour; we wanted her to appear as a queen or goddess; we feared above all to go near her.

Some of us, however, had little liking for such platonic paradoxes, and, in spite of the revived Alexandrian dreams, the gods of the nether regions now and then waved their torches, lighting up the darkness for a moment with a trail of sparks.—It was thus that on leaving the theatre with the bitter sadness caused by a vanished dream I used often to join the members of a club where many supped together and where melancholy was driven away by the inexhaustible fluency of a few brilliant and vivacious members, of stormy and sometimes sublime imaginations—such have always appeared at periods of renovation or decline—and whose discussions became so threatening that the more timid of their hearers ran to the windows to make sure if the Huns, Turcomans or Cossacks were not coming at last to cut short the arguments of these rhetors and sophists.

"Let us drink and love: that is wisdom!" Such was the only opinion of the younger men. One of them said to me: "For an age I have met you continually at the same theatre, in fact every time I go there. For *which one* is it?"

Which one? . . . It seemed to me impossible that one should go there for any *other*. Still, I gave him her name. —"Well then," said my friend, with indulgence, "look at that happy fellow over there: he has just accompanied her home, and faithful to the club regulations he will only join her again in the early morning."

Without much emotion I looked towards the man he had pointed out. He was a youth in correct attire, with a pale

and nervous face, well mannered; his eyes had a sad, gentle expression. He threw gold on a whist table and lost it with indifference.—" What matters it to me," thought I, " whether 'tis he or another? It was fated that someone should turn up, and this one appears to me worthy of her choice."—" And you? "—" I? I am only in pursuit of an image, nothing more."

On leaving, I passed through the reading-room and mechanically looked at a paper—I think it was to see the price of stocks. Among what remained of my past opulence I still possessed a large number of foreign bonds. A rumour had spread that they were about to be officially recognized after having been long neglected—which improvement was due to a ministerial change. They had already reached a high quotation, and I was once more a wealthy man.

A single thought possessed me after this change in my position: the woman I had loved so long would be mine if I chose; my ideal was within my grasp.—But might it not be another illusion, a mocking printer's error?—No, the other papers confirmed the news.—The fortune I had acquired stood before me like the golden statue of Moloch. " What would the young man I saw just now say," thought I, " if I took his place near the woman he parted from this evening? " . . . I shuddered at such a thought and my pride revolted.

No! that is wrong: love is not to be killed with gold at my age: I shall not be a corrupter. Besides, the idea is not of our time. Who says that she is to be bought? I vaguely ran over the paper which I still held and came across these two lines: *Festival of the Provincial Bouquet. To-morrow the archers of Senlis are to return the Bouquet to the archers of Loisy.* These very simple words reawoke in me quite a different series of impressions: they reminded me of a province I had long forgotten; I heard the distant echo of the rural fêtes of my youth.—The horn and drum sounded afar in the hamlets and woods; young girls wove garlands

and, as they sang, made up nosegays tied with ribbon; these were thrown into a heavy wain drawn by oxen, as it passed, and we, the children of the locality, formed an escort with our bows and arrows, proud of being called knights—not knowing that from age to age we only revived a druidical festival which had survived monarchies and new religions.

II

ADRIENNE

I went to bed, but found no rest. While I was plunged in semi-somnolence, the whole of my youth came back to my recollection. This state, when our mind still resists the fantastical combinations of a dream, often offers us in a few moments a hurried sequence of the most striking scenes of a long period in our lives.

I imagined I saw a château in the time of Henri IV, with its pointed roofs covered with slate and its red front with its jagged corners of stone yellow with age; a large piazza surrounded by elms and lime trees, whose foliage the setting sun pierced with its fiery darts. Young girls danced in a ring on the lawn, singing old songs transmitted to them by their mothers, with words of such pure French that one felt oneself once more in the old Valois country where the heart of France has beaten for upwards of two thousand years. I was the only lad in this round-dance to which I had brought my companion Sylvie, who was still quite a child—a little girl of the neighbouring hamlet, so full of life, so fresh, with her black eyes, her regular profile, her slightly tanned complexion! . . . She was the only one I had loved; I had seen no one but her up to that time! I had hardly noticed in the ring a fair, tall and handsome girl whom they called Adrienne. Suddenly, according to the rules of the dance, Adrienne found herself alone in the middle of the ring. We were both of the same height. We were told to kiss, and the dancers and singers turned round us with

even more spirit than before. In giving her that kiss, I could not help pressing her hand. The long curls of her golden hair lightly touched my cheeks. From that moment an unknown agitation took possession of me. The girl had to sing before being allowed to join the ring again. All present sat down around her, and at once, with a fresh and penetrating voice, slightly veiled, as are the girls' voices in that misty country, she sang one of those ancient songs full of melancholy and love, which always relate the misfortunes of a princess imprisoned in her tower by order of her father, to punish her for having loved. The melody ended at each stanza with those tremulous trills which bring out to such advantage the young voices imitating with a melodious shake their grandmothers' trembling tones.

As she sang, the shadows of the large trees lengthened, and the growing moonshine fell on her alone as she stood apart from our attentive circle.—She stopped singing, and no one dared to break the silence. The lawn was covered with light mists which unfurled their white flocks on the tips of the grass. We imagined we were in Paradise.—At last I got up and ran to the garden of the château where there were laurels, planted in large glazed earthenware pots decorated in monochrome. I brought back two twigs, twisted them into a crown and tied them with a ribbon. I placed this diadem on Adrienne's head; its glossy leaves shone on her fair hair under the pale rays of the moon. She looked like Dante's Beatrice smiling to the poet, while he wandered on the outskirts of the heavenly abodes.

Adrienne rose: she made us a graceful bow, her slender figure showing to advantage, and ran back to the château. She was, they told us, the granddaughter of a descendant of a family allied to the ancient kings of France and the blood of the Valois flowed in her veins. On this fête-day she had for once been permitted to join in our games. We were never to see her again, for on the next day she returned to the convent where she was a boarder.

When I went back to Sylvie, I saw that she was in tears. The crown my hands had brought to the handsome singer was the cause of her distress. I offered to go and gather more laurels, but she said she did not care for a crown as she had not earned it. In vain I tried to explain my conduct: she did not utter another word while I accompanied her home to her parents.

Called back to Paris to resume my studies, I carried away the double image of a tender friendship thus sadly broken, and of an impossible and vain love—a source of painful thoughts which my college philosophy was powerless to calm.

The figure of Adrienne alone remained triumphant, a mirage of glory and beauty that assuaged or shared my hours of intense study. During the holidays of the following year I heard that this fine girl I had only had a glimpse of had been consecrated by her family to a religious life.

III

RESOLUTION

This half-dreamed recollection made my way clear. The vague and hopeless love I had conceived for an actress, which flared up again every evening when it was time to go to the theatre and only left me when I went to bed, had its germ in the remembrance of Adrienne, who like a night flower had bloomed in the pale moonlight, a rosy and fair phantom gliding over the green grass half bathed in white mist. The resemblance of a figure forgotten for years henceforth took shape with a singular distinctness; it seemed to become a painting, as does a sketch softened by time, like the drawings of old masters we admire in museums, whose dazzling originals we meet with in some other place.

To love a nun in the shape of an actress! . . . It might be the same person!—It was enough to drive one mad! It was a fatal allurement, the unknown, drawing one on like a

will-o'-the-wisp flying over the rushes of a stagnant pool. . . . Let us get back to solid ground!

And Sylvie I had loved so dearly, why have I forgotten her for three years? . . . She was indeed a pretty girl, the most beautiful of Loisy! No doubt she still exists, good and pure of heart. I can see her window where the vine is entwined with the climbing roses; on the left hangs the warbler's cage. I can hear the clatter of her sonorous bobbins and her favourite song:

The belle was seated
By the flowing brook . . .

She is still waiting for me. . . . Who would have married her? She is so poor! In her village, and in the villages round about, only simple peasants were to be found, wearing their smocks: their hands were rough, their faces emaciated, their complexions sunburnt. She loved me alone, me the little Parisian, when I went on visits, near Loisy, to see my poor uncle now deceased. During the last three years I have nobly squandered the modest fortune he had left me, retaining just enough to live on. With Sylvie I would still be enjoying it. Luck has now returned me part of it: it is not too late.

What is she doing at this late hour? She is asleep. . . . No, not that: to-day is the Archers' Festival, the only day when dancing will be kept up all night.—She must be at that dance.

What time is it?—I had no watch.

Among all the splendid bric-à-brac it was then the fashion to collect, in order to restore its local colouring to an ancient apartment, shone with renovated brightness one of those Renaissance tortoise-shell clocks, whose gilt cupola, surmounted by the figure of Time, was supported by caryatides in the Medici style, standing in their turn upon horses about to rear. The historic Diana, leaning on her stag, is represented in low relief under the dial; the hours are of

enamel on a ground inlaid with niello. The movement, no doubt of excellent workmanship, has not been wound up for two centuries.—It was not to tell the time that I had bought this clock in Touraine. I went down to the porter's lodge. His cuckoo clock showed it was one in the morning.—In four hours, thought I, I can get to the ball at Loisy. On the piazza before the Palais-Royal five or six cabs were still on the rank, waiting for members of clubs or gambling-houses. "To Loisy!" I called to the best-looking of them—"near Senlis, eight leagues from here."—"I'll take you to the posting-house," replied the cabman, who was less preoccupied.

What a sad road at night is that Flanders road which only begins to be beautiful on reaching the forest country. Ah! those two endless rows of monotonous trees with their vague, grimacing forms! Beyond were squares of cultivated or ploughed ground, bounded on the left by the bluish hills of Montmorency, Ecouen, Luzarches. Now comes Gonesse, that uninteresting village, reminding me, however, of the Ligue and the Fronde.

We came, after passing Louvres, to a road bordered by apple trees; many a time have I seen their blooms burst forth at night like stars of our earth. It was the shortest road to the hamlets. While the chaise climbs up the hillsides, I will recall the scenes of the times when I so frequently visited there.

IV

TO CYTHEREA

Some years had gone by, and my meeting with Adrienne was already nothing more than a recollection of my childhood. I had again come to Loisy for the patronal fête. I again joined the Knights of the Bow in the company I had formed part of before. Some young men, belonging to ancient families that still possessed here and there a château, lost in the forests, which had suffered more from time than

from revolutions, had organized the festival. From Chantilly, Compiègne and Senlis hurried merry cavalcades that took up their positions in the rustic procession of the Knights of the Bow. After a long march through villages and townlets, and after hearing Mass at church, we had athletic sports, followed by the distribution of prizes. The winners had been invited to a repast held on an island, shaded by poplars and limes, in the middle of one of the lakes fed by the Nonette and the Thève. Boats decorated with bunting brought us to the island, which had been chosen for the occasion on account of an oval, columnar temple: the latter was to be used as a banqueting hall. As at Ermenonville the country is studded with these airy edifices of the late eighteenth century, built by millionaire philosophers inspired by the prevailing fashion. I am sure this temple must have originally been dedicated to Urania. Three of its columns had collapsed, carrying away in their fall part of the architrave; but the interior of the hall had been cleared of débris; garlands had been hung between the columns; the modern ruin had been rejuvenated. Its paganism reminded one rather of Boufflers or Chaulieu than of Horace.

The journey across the lake had probably been inspired by Watteau's picture of the *Voyage à Cythère*. Our modern attire alone disturbed the illusion. The immense festal bouquet, having been lifted out of the car that had conveyed it, was placed in a large boat. Girls in white frocks, who accompanied it according to custom, sat on the seats of the boat, and this graceful *theoria*, copied from antique Athenian times, was reflected in the calm waters which separated us from the banks of the island. Its thorny thickets, light-foliaged trees and colonnade were all reddened by the glow of the setting sun. The boats soon reached the land. The basket, carried in state, was placed in the centre of the table. Each youth took his seat, the luckiest next to a girl; he owed this favour to his acquaintance with her parents. As this was my case, I sat next to Sylvie. Her brother had

already found me before and reproached me for not having paid a visit to his family for such an age. I laid the blame on my studies: they kept me in Paris: I assured him that I had come on purpose to call on them. "No, he has forgotten me," said Sylvie, "we are village folks and Paris is so superior!" I wanted to kiss her in order to close her mouth; but she still sulked and her brother had to intervene to make her offer me her cheek, which she did with an air of indifference. I felt no joy from this kiss, as many others obtained the same favour in this patriarchal country-side, where one salutes every passer-by, for a kiss is nothing more than a salutation between friendly people.

A surprise had been prepared by the organizers of the festival. At the end of the repast, a wild swan, kept a captive under the flowers, flew out of the large basket, and lifting with its powerful wings a network of garlands and crowns, ended by strewing them about on all sides. While the bird joyously took its flight towards the waning light of the sun, the youths scrambled for the crowns with which they ran to adorn the brows of their partners. I was lucky enough to secure one of the prettiest, and Sylvie, smiling, allowed herself this time to be kissed more tenderly than the first. I now felt that my past neglect was forgotten, and I admired her, her alone. How beautiful she had grown! She was no longer the little village girl I had disdained for another who was older and more versed in worldly graces. Everything in her had improved: the charm of her dark eyes, which from her childhood had captivated me, had become irresistible; her smile, lighting up her regular and serene features under her arched eyebrows, had something quite Athenian about it. I admired her face, which was that of a Grecian statue, compared to the irregular features of her companions. Her long, delicate hands, her arms that had become whiter as they grew rounder, her graceful figure made her quite different from the child I had hitherto known. I could not refrain from telling her how altered I

found her, hoping thus to excuse my sudden infidelity. Everything was also in my favour, her brother's friendship, the charming effect of the fête, the evening hour, and the surrounding country-side, so favourable for the reproduction of the picturesque festivities of bygone ages. We seized upon every opportunity to escape from the dance, to chat about what we had done as children, and dreamily to admire the woods and waters, tinted with heavenly light. Sylvie's brother had to tear us away from our contemplation, declaring that it was time to return to the somewhat distant village where their parents resided.

V

THE VILLAGE

It was at Loisy, in the house of a former gamekeeper. I accompanied them thither and returned to Montagny, where I was staying with my uncle. On leaving the road to cross a little wood which separates Loisy from Saint-S . . ., I soon got into a deep pathway which skirted the forest of Ermenonville, expecting to come to the wall of a convent that I had to follow for a quarter of a league. Now and then the moon was hidden by clouds and I could hardly distinguish the rocks of dark sandstone, and the heather which grew thicker as I proceeded. To both right and left were forests through which no roads had been made, and in front of me I could just distinguish the druidical rocks of the district, the only memorials of the sons of Armen exterminated by the Romans! From the summits of these sublime mounds I could espy distant lakes that gleamed like mirrors on the misty plain; I could not, however, make out the lake where the fête had been held. The air was tepid and embalmed: I determined not to proceed further, and to wait for the morning light, lying down under a thicket of heather.—On awaking I recognized little by little the neighbourhood where I had lost my way the night

before: to my left I saw appear the long wall of the convent of Saint-S . . ., and beyond the valley the hill known as the *Gens d'Armes*, with its ruins of the ancient Carlovingian residence. Near there, above the glades, the ruins of the Abbey of Thiers carved their walls out on the horizon, pierced with trefoil and ogive; farther on, the water that still surrounds Pontarmé reflected the early rays of the sun, while to the south stood the high keep of la Tournelle and the four towers of Bertrand-Fosse on the hills towards Montméliant.

The night had been a pleasant one, I having only thought of Sylvie; but the sight of the convent reminded me for a moment that it was perhaps there that Adrienne was a nun. The ringing of the morning bell was still in my ears, and no doubt its sound had awakened me. I felt a passing desire to look over the wall from one of the highest rocks; but on second thoughts I abstained from such a profanation. The growing daylight drove from my mind this vain vision and only the rosy features of Sylvie remained. "I shall go and wake her," thought I, and I continued my way to Loisy.

Here is the hamlet, at the end of the path that skirts the forest: twenty cottages whose walls are festooned by vine and climbing roses. Early risers were spinning in a group near a farm, their heads covered with red kerchiefs. Sylvie was not amongst them. She has nearly become a young lady since she makes fine lace, while her parents remain simple villagers!—I went up to her room without thereby causing any surprise; she had been up some time and was plying her bobbins, that clattered gently on the green oilskin she had on her knees. "There you are, lazy-bones," she said with her divine smile, "I am sure you have only just got out of bed!" I told her I had passed a sleepless night and had lost my way running through the woods and rocks. She deigned to pity me for a moment. "Unless you are tired," she added, "I will give you another run: let us

pay a visit to my great-aunt at Othys." Hardly had I assented, when she rose merrily, did up her hair in front of a looking-glass, and put on a rustic straw hat. Innocence and joy beamed in her eyes. We at first followed the banks of the Thève through meadows sown with daisies and buttercups; then we skirted the woods of St. Laurent, now and then jumping over brooks and bushes to shorten the way. Blackbirds whistled in the trees and gay warblers escaped from the thickets we brushed as we passed.

At times we came across the periwinkles so dear to Rousseau, opening their blue petals on their long two-leaved stems, humble creepers that impeded the light steps of my companion. Indifferent to the flowers that reminded me of the Genevan philosopher, she looked here and there for wild strawberries, while I spoke to her of the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, several passages of which I repeated by heart. "Is it pretty?" she asked.—"It is sublime."—"Is it better than Auguste Lafontaine?"—"It is more tender."—"Oh!" she exclaimed, "I must read that book: I shall tell my brother to get it the first time he goes to Senlis." And I went on reciting fragments of *Héloïse* while Sylvie gathered strawberries.

VI

OTHYS

On leaving the wood we met with some large tufts of purple foxglove of which she made a fine bouquet and said: "It is for my great-aunt; she is so happy to have lovely flowers in her room." We had only a small plain to cross in order to reach Othys. The village steeple had for background the bluish hills that rise between Montméliant and Dammartin. The Thève again rumbled among rocks and pebbles, getting shallower towards its source, where it spreads about the meadows forming a lake among cornflags and irises. We soon reached the first houses. Sylvie's aunt dwelt in a cottage built of unequal blocks of sandstone,

trellised with hops and Virginia creeper. She lived all alone on the produce of a few plots of land which the villagers had cultivated for her since her husband's death. When her niece came to see her the house was upside-down. "Good-morning, Aunt, here are your children!" exclaimed Sylvie,—"we are very hungry!" She kissed her aunt tenderly, put into her arms the bunch of flowers, and only then thought of introducing me, saying: "Here is my sweetheart!" I embraced the aunt, who remarked: "He is a nice fellow. . . . So you wanted a fair one!" . . .—"He has pretty, delicate hair," said Sylvie.—"That does not last long," retorted the aunt; "but you have plenty of time before you. You, a brunette, and he make a good pair."—"We must give him his breakfast," added Sylvie. And off she ran to search the cupboards, the chest: she found milk, stale bread, and sugar. She carelessly spread over the table plates and dishes of glazed earthenware, decorated with large flowers and brilliantly painted cocks. A bowl of Creil china, full of milk in which swam strawberries, became the centre-piece; and after having despoiled the garden of some handfuls of cherries and gooseberries, she placed a vase full of flowers at each end of the table. But the aunt had uttered these welcome words: "All this is only dessert: now let us proceed." Thereupon she unhooked the frying-pan and threw a faggot into the high-chimneyed hearth. "You are not to touch that!" she told Sylvie, who offered her help. "You are not to spoil pretty fingers that make finer lace than Chantilly! You have given me some and I know all about it."—"You do indeed, Aunt! By-the-by, if you have any of the old style, I can use it for models."—"Well then, go and look upstairs, there may be some in my chest of drawers."—"Give me the key," observed Sylvie.—"Bah!" replied the aunt, "the drawers are not locked."—"Not a bit of it! There is a drawer that always is." And while the good woman cleaned the pan after having heated it, Sylvie untied a little key of

chiselled steel hanging from her aunt's belt, and showed it me triumphantly.

I followed her quickly up the wooden staircase which led to the room.—O holy youth! O holy old age!—Who could have thought of tarnishing the purity of a first love in this sanctuary of faithful memories? The portrait of a young man of the good old times smiled with his black eyes and fresh lips in a gilt oval frame hanging at the head of the bed. He wore the uniform of a gamekeeper of the House of Condé; his half-martial attitude, his rosy and kindly face, his honest brow under his powdered hair, invested this rather ordinary pastel with all the graces of youth and simpleness. Some modest artist, included in the prince's hunting-party, had tried to draw his likeness as well as he could, and also that of his young wife, who appeared in another oval frame, attractive, arch, well-shaped in her open bodice, laced with ribbon, teasing, with turned-up face, a bird perched on her finger. This was the portrait of the kindly old woman who was then cooking, bent over the hearth. It reminded me of the fairies at the Théâtre des Funambules, who under their wrinkled masks hide an attractive face, to be uncovered only when at last appears the Temple of Love with its revolving sun that emits magic rays. "O kind aunt," I exclaimed, "how pretty you were!"—"How about me?" said Sylvie, who had succeeded in opening the famous drawer. She had found a long dress of red-brown silk that rustled in unfolding.—"I would like to try it on," she said, "I shall look like an old-time fairy!"

"The legendary fairy who is always young!" thought I.—And already Sylvie had unhooked her cotton dress, which fell to her feet. The aunt's ample dress easily fitted Sylvie's slender figure: she asked me to hook it up. "Oh! the flat sleeves, how ridiculous they are!" she exclaimed. And yet the short sleeves with frilled lace showed her bare arms to great advantage; her neck and shoulders fitted perfectly

in the bodice of white tulle mellowed by time, trimmed with faded ribbon, and which had hardly ever clasped the aunt's vanished charms. "When will you have done? Don't you know how to hook up a dress?" said Sylvie. She looked the very image of Greuze's *Accordée de Village*. "You ought to powder your face," said I.—"I'll find some powder," she replied; and she ferreted anew in the drawers. Oh! what riches! How nice it all smelled and glittered and shone, with the bright colours of simple imitation jewellery! There were two mother-of-pearl fans partly broken, paste-boxes decorated with Chinese figures, an amber necklace and a hundred valueless articles, the principal of which were two slippers of woollen cloth whose buckles were inlaid with Irish diamonds! "I shall put them on," exclaimed Sylvie, "if I can find the embroidered stockings!"

A moment after we unrolled a pair of silk stockings of a delicate pink colour, with green edges; but the aunt's voice and the frizzling sound of the frying-pan suddenly brought us back to reality. "Go down quickly," said Sylvie, and in spite of my entreaties she did not allow me to help her in putting on the stockings. Meanwhile the aunt had emptied into a dish the contents of the pan—a rasher of fried bacon, and eggs. Sylvie at once called: "Put on the clothes quickly!" and, already quite dressed herself, she pointed to the keeper's wedding attire that lay on the chest of drawers. It took me only a minute to transform myself into a bridegroom of the last century. Sylvie waited for me on the stairs and we went down together, hand in hand. The aunt on turning round uttered a cry, "O my children!" and began to weep and smile in the midst of her tears. We had reminded her of her youth—'twas a cruel yet charming recollection. We sat down by her, steeped in emotion and full of grave thoughts; but gaiety soon prevailed. For after the first moment of sadness the good old woman only remembered the pompous scenes of her wedding-day. She

even sang the songs that in her time were alternately taken up at both ends of the table, and the naïve bridal carol that accompanied the married pair on their return from the dance. We repeated these stanzas with their simple rhythm, their clashing of vowels and the imperfect rhymes that were then admitted; they were as amorous and florid in style as the Canticle of Canticles. We two were bridegroom and spouse for a whole beautiful summer morning.

VII

CHÂALIS

It is four o'clock in the morning: the road went down and up again with the folds of the ground. The chaise is passing through Orry; then comes la Chapelle. We notice on the left a road that skirts the wood of Hallate. One evening Sylvie's brother had taken me that way to a local fête in his cart. It was, I believe, on a St. Bartholomew's Day. His pony flew through the woods, along abominable roads, as to a witches' Sabbath. We got back to the paved highway at Mont-l'Évêque, and a few minutes later we stopped at the custodian's lodge, close to the ancient abbey of Châalis.—Châalis, another reminiscence!

This old imperial retreat now only offers to our admiration the ruins of its cloister with its Byzantine arches, the last row of which still stands out against a background of lakes—a forgotten memorial of the pious foundations erected in the demesnes formerly known as the Farms of Charlemagne. Religion, removed in this locality from the bustle of roads and towns, has preserved certain traces of the extensive period when cardinals of the House of Este, contemporaries of the Medici, resided there; its attributes and customs still smack of a certain flavour of gallantry and poetry, and the atmosphere of the Renaissance still permeates the arcades of the finely-ribbed chapels, decorated by Italian artists. The figures of saints and angels are drawn in rosy

profile on the vaults, painted in light blue, affecting a pagan allegorical air, which recalls the sentimentality of Petrarch and the fabulous mysticism of Francesco Colonna.

Sylvie's brother and I were intruders at the private fête which was held that night. A person of very illustrious birth, the owner of the estate, had decided to invite a few families of the locality to a kind of allegorical show, in which several pupils of the neighbouring convent were to take part. This show was not a renewal of the tragedies acted at St. Cyr, but took us as far back as the first lyrical attempts imported into France under the Valois. What I saw performed was like a miracle play of olden times. The costumes were long robes of various colours, azure, hyacinth or saffron. Only angels appeared on the stage among the ruins of the world. Each voice celebrated some past splendour of the extinct globe, and the Angel of Death explained the cause of its destruction. A spirit arose from the abyss, holding a fiery sword, and called upon his compeers to do homage to Christ, the conqueror of Hell. This spirit was Adrienne, transfigured by her costume as she already was by her religious vocation. The gilt cardboard nimbus that surrounded her angelical head seemed to us a very real circle of light; her voice had improved in strength and amplitude, and the repeated flourishes in the Italian style embroidered like the warbling of birds the severe passages of a pompous recitativo.

When recalling these scenes I ask myself if I really witnessed them, or if I only saw them in a dream. Sylvie's brother was rather tipsy that evening. We had stopped for a few minutes at the custodian's lodge—where I was greatly struck when I saw a swan with spread wings over the door, and high armoires in carved walnut, a tall clock in its case, and trophies of bows and arrows of honour surmounting a red and green target.

An odd-looking dwarf in a Chinese cap, holding a bottle in one hand and a ring in the other, seemed to urge the

archers to aim accurately. The dwarf, if I am not mistaken, was cut out of sheet-iron. But could the apparition of Adrienne be as real as these details and the undoubted existence of the abbey of Châalis? It was certainly the custodian's son who had conducted us to the hall where the play was acted; we stood near the door behind a numerous company that sat abandoned to deep emotion. It was St. Bartholomew's Day, a day particularly linked with the memory of the Medici, whose armorial bearings, coupled with those of the House of Este, decorated the ancient walls. . . . All this may simply have been an obsession!—Fortunately the chaise was waiting on the road to Plessis, and I escaped from a world of dreams, having only a quarter of an hour's walk to reach Loisy by very unfrequented roads.

VIII

THE BALL AT LOISY

I arrived at the ball at the melancholy yet pleasant hour when the lights begin to pale and tremble at the approach of day. While the lower part of the limes was still dark, their tops were already coloured by a bluish tint. The rustic flute could no longer compete successfully with the nightingale's trills. All the dancers looked pale, and in the thinning groups I could hardly find faces I knew. At last I espied tall Lise, a friend of Sylvie's. She kissed me. "We've not seen you for a long time, Parisian," she said.—"Oh, yes, a long time."—"Why are you so late?"—"I came by the post-chaise."—"Not too soon."—"I just wanted to see Sylvie; is she still at the dance?"—"She only leaves when morning comes; she enjoys herself so much."

A moment after I was at her side. Her face looked tired, yet her dark eye was brightened by the Athenian smile of former years. A young man stood next to her. She made him understand by a sign that she did not wish to dance the next quadrille. He retired after bowing.

The morning being already well advanced, we left the ball hand in hand. The flowers were drooping in Sylvie's loosened tresses; the nosegay in her bodice was shedding its leaves on her crumpled lace, the skilful work of her hands. I offered to accompany her home. It was now broad daylight, but the sky was gloomy. The Thève rumbled on our left; at its sudden turns it formed quiet pools, where yellow and white lilies spread, and the frail embroidery of small white flowers shone like daisies. The plains were covered with bundles and ricks of hay, whose scent went to my head, without, however, intoxicating me as the fresh fragrance of the woods and of the flowering bramble thickets used to do.

The idea of walking through them once more did not enter our minds. "Sylvie," I said, "you no longer love me."—She sighed.—"My friend," she went on to say, "we must console ourselves; things do not go as we like in life; you once told me about the *Nouvelle Héloïse;* I have read it through, although I shuddered when I first read the sentence: 'Every young girl who reads this book is lost.' I nevertheless went on with it, trusting to reason. Do you remember the day when we dressed up in my aunt's wedding clothes? . . . The illustrations of the book represent the lovers in their old-fashioned attire, so that for me you were Saint-Preux; as for me, I recognized myself in Julie. Ah! why did you not return then? But, as you said, you were in Italy. There you saw plenty of girls prettier than me!"—"Not one, Sylvie, with a look like yours and the pure features of your face. You are, without knowing it, a nymph out of antiquity. Moreover, these woods are as fine as those of the Roman Campagna. I have seen, not far from here, masses of granite not less sublime, and a cascade falling over rocks worthy of the falls at Terni. In Italy I did not come across anything that I could not find here."—"And in Paris?" she interrupted.—"In Paris . . .?"

I shook my head without replying.

Suddenly the vain image that had so long led me astray came to my mind.—"Sylvie," I said, "do you care to stop here for a while?"

I threw myself at her feet, confessing with bitter tears how irresolute and capricious I had been, and described the fatal spectre that still pursued me.—"Save me," I implored, "I now return to you for ever."

She looked at me, full of compassion.

At this moment our conversation was interrupted by a loud burst of laughter, and Sylvie's brother joined us with his unalloyed rustic gaiety which was natural enough after a night's carousing, which had been made rather too exuberant by repeated drinks. He called to Sylvie's partner at the ball; he was hidden some distance away in the thorny bushes, and soon made his appearance. The youth was not firmer on his feet than his friend and seemed to be more embarrassed by a Parisian's presence than by Sylvie's. His honest face, his shy deference, forbade all grudge on my part for his having been the partner who had kept Sylvie so late at the ball.

"We must go home," Sylvie said to her brother. "Good-bye for the present," she added, offering me her cheek.

At which her lover took no offence.

IX

ERMENONVILLE

As I did not feel at all sleepy, I bent my steps towards Montagny to see my uncle's house once more. Great sadness overcame me on perceiving its yellow front and green shutters. Nothing had changed. But this time I had to go to the farmer for the key. When the shutters were opened, I looked with emotion at the old furniture which stood in the same position; now and then it was rubbed with wax. There I recognized the high walnut armoire, the two Flemish pictures, said to have been painted by our grand-

father, the large prints after Boucher, and the complete collection of framed engravings by Moreau, illustrating *Émile* and the *Nouvelle Héloïse*. On the table was a stuffed dog I had known alive, the former companion of my walks through the woods, perhaps the last of pug-dogs, for he belonged to that forgotten race.

"The parrot," said the farmer, "is still alive: my cottage has become his retreat."

The garden offered a grand picture of vegetation gone wild. I recognized in a corner a child's plot which I had laid out. I trembled as I entered the study where stood the little bookcase full of choice volumes, the old friends of one who was no more; on the desk lay a few antique remains my uncle had found in his garden, Roman vases and medals, a local collection he was happy to possess.

"Let us go and see the parrot," I said to the farmer.

The bird was asking for its breakfast as it had done in its best days; it looked at me with its round eyes edged with wrinkled skin, reminding one of the experienced look of an old man. Full of the sad ideas evoked by my tardy return to a place I had loved so much, I felt a longing to see Sylvie again; Sylvie the only person still full of life and youth who could attach me to the locality. I returned to Loisy: it was midday, all were still sleeping after the fatigues of the ball. So I whiled away the time by a stroll to Ermenonville, distant about a league through the forest. It was a fine summer's day. At first I enjoyed the freshness of the road, which resembles an avenue in a park. The uniform green of the large oaks was only varied by the white trunks of the birch trees, with their quivering foliage. The birds were silent and I only heard the noise made by a woodpecker striking a tree to hollow out its nest. For a moment I nearly lost my way, the directions on the guide-posts having in many places become quite obliterated. Leaving the *Desert* on my left, I at last reached the circular cross-road where folks used to dance and where the elders'

bench still stands. Reminiscences of the philosophers of antiquity, revived by the owner of the demesne, crowded upon my memory in presence of this picturesque realization of *Anacharsis* and *Émile*.

When I saw the waters of the lake shine through the branches of the willows and hazel-nut trees, I clearly recognized a spot to which my uncle in his walks had often led me: there was the *Temple of Philosophy* which its founder never had the pleasure of completing. In shape it is like the temple of the Tiburtine Sibyl; it is sheltered by a pine grove and proudly displays the names of all the great thinkers from Montaigne to Descartes, down to Rousseau. The unfinished edifice is now a ruin, gracefully festooned with ivy, and brambles have invaded its disjointed steps. There, as a child, I witnessed festivals where young girls dressed in white came to receive prizes for their work and good conduct. Where are the rose bushes that surrounded the hill? Eglantines and raspberry bushes hide the last of these plants, that have become wild again. And the laurels, have they been cut down, as says the song of the maidens, who will no longer go to the woods? No, these shrubs transplanted from Italy's mild clime have perished under our foggy skies. Happily Virgil's privet still blooms, as if to emphasize the quotation from the master inscribed over the door: *Rerum cognoscere causas!* Yes, this temple is falling into decay like so many others: forgetful or weary, men will turn away from its approaches, and indifferent nature will reconquer the ground which art contended for; but the thirst for knowledge will remain eternal, a constant incentive to all effort and activity!

Here are the poplars of the island and Rousseau's tomb, deprived of his ashes. O sage, you had given us the milk of the strong, and we were too weak to derive benefit from its nourishment. We have forgotten the teaching understood by our fathers, and we have lost the meaning of your words, the last echo of ancient wisdom. And yet let us not

despair, as you did at the supreme moment; let us turn our eyes towards the sun!

I looked once more upon the château, on the peaceful waters that surrounded it, on the cascade sighing among the rocks, on the road that unites both parts of the village, whose four corners are indicated by pigeon-houses; on the lawn that spread around like a prairie under shady hill-sides. Gabrielle's Tower is reflected from afar in the waters of an artificial lake, whose short-lived flowers stud it like stars; the foam bubbles, the insects hum. . . . I must fly from the treacherous emanations that arise, to the powdery sandstone of the *Desert* and the moors where the ruddy heather sets off the green ferns. How solitary and sad is all the landscape! Sylvie's enchanting glance, her wild running to and fro, her joyous shouts once gave so much charm to the places I have just visited! She was then a woodland child with bare feet; her complexion was tanned in spite of her straw hat, whose wide ribbon flew about entangled in the tresses of her black hair. We used to go and drink milk at the Swiss farm and people would say: "What a pretty sweetheart you have, little Parisian." Ah! no mere peasant would have been chosen for her parlour then: she only danced with me, once a year at the Festival of the Bow.

X

THE TALL, CURLY-HEADED FOSTER-BROTHER

I had got back to Loisy: this time all were out of bed. Sylvie was dressed like a young lady, nearly as fashionably as in town. She made me go up to her room with all her former candour. Her eyes sparkled as ever, and her smile was full of charm; but her distinctly arched eyebrows sometimes made her appear serious. The room was decorated with simplicity although the furniture was modern: a mirror in a gilt frame had succeeded the antique pier-glass on which was painted an idyllic shepherd offering

a nest to a blue and pink shepherdess. The four-post bed chastely draped with old flowering chintz had made room for a small walnut bedstead overhung by two curtains; at the window canaries occupied the cage once tenanted by warblers. "Are you not going to make lace to-day?" I said to Sylvie.—"Oh! I do not make lace now, there is no demand for it here; even at Chantilly the factory has been closed."—"What is your occupation at present?"—She took from a corner an iron instrument that looked like a pair of long tweezers.—"What is that?"—"It is what is called a *mécanique*, and it is used to stretch the leather while we sew gloves."—"So you are making gloves, Sylvie?"—"Yes, we work here for the Dammartin trade which is flourishing, but I am quite free to-day, let us go for a walk, anywhere you like." I looked towards the road to Othys: she shook her head, and I understood that the old aunt was dead. Sylvie called a small boy and told him to saddle a donkey.—"I am still tired from yesterday, but a walk will do me good; let us go to Châalis." And we went through the wood, followed by the small boy, who was armed with a branch. Sylvie soon asked to stop: I kissed her and requested her to sit down. Our conversation could not now be very intimate. I had to tell her how I lived in Paris—where I had been. . . .—"How can one travel so far?" she exclaimed.—"When I behold you, I ask myself the same question."—"Oh! you don't mean it!"—"You must admit that you were not formerly as pretty as you are now."—"That I can't tell."—"Do you remember the time when we were children and you the older of the two?"—"And you the better behaved."—"Oh, Sylvie!"—"They used to put us on the donkey, each in a pannier."—"We did not say *you* instead of *thou* to one another then." . . . "Dost thou remember how thou taught me to catch craw-fish under the bridges of the Nonette and Thève?"—"Dost thou remember thy foster-brother who one day fished you out of the *waaater?*"—"The tall, curly-haired boy! He

had told me I could get across the *waaater!*" I hastened to change the subject. She had vividly reminded me of the time when I came to the village in a little English jacket that made the peasants laugh. Sylvie alone found me nicely dressed; but I dared not remind her of an opinion expressed so long ago. I know not why my mind was carried back to the wedding clothes we had tried on at Othys in the old aunt's room. I inquired what had become of them.—"Ah! my good aunt," said Sylvie, "she lent me her dress for a dance at Dammartin two years ago. In the following year she died; poor aunt!"

She sighed and wept, and I had not the heart to ask her under what circumstances she had been to a fancy ball, realizing that she was now no longer a peasant girl, thanks to her skill as a lace-maker. Her parents alone had not improved their condition, and she lived with them like an industrious fairy, spreading abundance around her.

XI

THE RETURN

When we left the wood the whole country became open to view: we had reached the lakes of Châalis; the cloisters, the chapel with its slender pointed arches, the feudal tower, and the little château that had harboured the loves of Henri IV and Gabrielle, reddened in the morning glow on a background of sombre forest green. "It is like Walter Scott's scenery," said Sylvie.—"Who has mentioned Walter Scott to you?" I replied. "You must have read a great deal during the last three years! . . . I am trying to forget books; for me it is pleasant to revisit in your company that ancient abbey, where as little children we used to hide among the ruins. Do you remember, Sylvie, how frightened you were when the custodian told us the story of the red monks?"—"Oh! do not speak to me of that."—"Then sing me the song of the beautiful girl who was carried away

from under the white rose bush in her father's garden."—" Nobody sings that now."—" Have you become musical? "—" I have, a little."—" Sylvie, Sylvie, I am sure you sing operatic airs! "—" Why that remark? "—" Because I loved the old songs which now you would not know how to sing."

Sylvie modulated a passage from a modern grand opera. She had become quite formal.

We had got beyond the lakes. Here spread the greensward where we had so often danced! To show off my learning I explained the old Carlovingian walls, and the armorial bearings of the House of Este.—" And you! how much more you have read than I! " said Sylvie. " Have you become a learned man? "

I was piqued by this reproachful tone. Until then I had been intent on finding a suitable spot to resume our less reserved conversation of the morning; but what could I say while a donkey brayed and a wide-awake small boy took evident pleasure in coming nearer and nearer to hear a Parisian speak? I then so far forgot myself as to tell her of the apparition at Châalis which haunted my memory, and I led Sylvie into the very hall of the château where I had heard Adrienne sing. " Oh! let me hear you," I exclaimed; " let your dear voice resound under these vaults and expel from them the spirit that torments me, whether it be that of an angel or a demon."—She repeated the melody and the words after me:

Angels, descend without delay
Into the depths of purgatory.

" That is sad indeed," she remarked.

" It is sublime. . . . I think the music is by Porpora; the words were translated in the sixteenth century."

" That I cannot say," answered Sylvie.

We went home by the valley along the wood to Charlepont, which the peasants, who are always fond of etymologies, persist in calling Châllepont. Sylvie, tired of riding the donkey, leaned on my arm. / The road was deserted,

and I tried to express what was in my heart, but why, I know not, I could only turn vulgar phrases, or suddenly came out with a stilted sentence taken from a novel—which Sylvie might have read! Then I remained silent in the best classical style, and she was surprised at these spasmodic effusions. When we reached the wall of Saint S . . . we had to proceed carefully: our way lay through damp meadows where rivulets abounded.—"What has become of the nun?" I asked all at once.

"Ah! you are terrible with your nun. . . . Well, well, if it comes to that, it ended badly."

She would not add another word.

Do women really feel that what we sometimes say just passes our lips without coming from the heart? One would hardly believe it, judging by the ease with which they are deceived, and by the men they so often choose: some of these act the comedy of love to such perfection! I never could have played that part, although convinced that certain women knowingly accept deliberate deception.

Moreover, a love that dates from childhood is something sacred. . . . Sylvie, whom I had seen grow up, was for me like a sister. I, attempt to seduce her! No, that was out of the question . . . and a totally different idea crossed my mind. "I would at this hour be at the theatre," thought I. "What is Aurélie, the actress, playing to-night? Evidently the part of the princess in the new drama. Oh! how heart-rending she is in the third act! . . . And in the love scene of the second!—with a lover whose face is all wrinkles. . . ."

"You are in your meditative mood!" said Sylvie, and she began to sing:

At Dammartin are three fine girls,
One of them finer than the day . . .

"You are wilful!" I exclaimed, "you see, you still know some old songs."—"If you came here oftener, I could find a few," she said; "but I have realities to think of. You

have your business in Paris and I have my work to do; let us not get home too late: to-morrow I have to rise with the sun."

XII

FATHER DODU

I was going to reply, to fall at her feet, to offer her my uncle's house which I had a chance of securing, as there were several heirs, and the small property had not been divided; but we had just reached Loisy, where we were expected for supper. An onion soup sent forth from far its patriarchal aroma. A few neighbours had been asked to spend the day after the fête. I at once recognized an old woodcutter, Father Dodu, who used to tell us such funny or terrible stories round the evening hearth. Having been in turns shepherd, messenger, gamekeeper, angler, and even poacher, Father Dodu, in his leisure hours, made cuckoo-clocks and turnspits. For a long time he had shown English tourists about Ermenonville, taking them to places where Rousseau had meditated, and telling them of his last moments. As a little boy he had been employed by the philosopher in classifying his herbs; he had been commissioned by him to gather the hemlock whose juice Rousseau squeezed into his cup of coffee and milk. As the host of the *Croix d'Or* had contested the truth of this story, they had long been enemies. For ages Father Dodu had suffered obloquy on account of some very innocent secrets, such as curing sick cows by reciting a scriptural verse backwards, and for tracing the sign of the cross with his left foot; but he had soon given up these superstitions, owing, as he said, to what he remembered of Jean-Jacques's conversations.

"Oh! 'tis you, little Parisian," said Father Dodu. "Have you come to corrupt our girls?"—"I, Father Dodu?"—"Don't you take them to the woods when the wolf is away?"—"You are the wolf, Father Dodu."—"So I was, while I could find ewes; at present I only meet

goats, and they know how to defend themselves! But you Parisians are a wily lot! Jean-Jacques was right in saying: 'Man becomes corrupted in the poisonous atmosphere of towns.' "—" Father Dodu, you know too well that man becomes corrupted everywhere."

Father Dodu began to hum a drinking-song. Vainly did they try to stop him at a risky verse that they all knew by heart. Sylvie refused to sing in spite of our entreaties, remarking that people did not sing at table nowadays. I had already noticed that her admirer of the night before sat on her left. There was something in his round face and disordered hair that was not unknown to me. He rose, came behind my chair and said to me: " Don't you know me, Parisian? "

An oldish woman who, after serving at table, had come in for dessert, whispered to me: " Don't you know your foster-brother again? " Without this warning I would have said something ridiculous. " Ah! it's you, big curly boy," said I, " the one who got me out of the *waaater!* " Sylvie laughed aloud at this recognition. " And besides," added the lad, embracing me, " you had a fine silver watch, and on our way home you made more fuss about your watch than about yourself, because it had stopped; you said: 'The beast is *drooned*, I can't hear it tick; what will my uncle say?' "—" A beast in a watch! " exclaimed Father Dodu, " that is what they make Parisian children believe! "

Sylvie felt sleepy; which proved that I no longer occupied her thoughts. She went up to her room, and when I kissed her she said: " Come and see us to-morrow! "

Father Dodu had remained at table with Sylvie and my foster-brother. We had a long chat over a flagon of Louvres ratafia. " All men are equal," said Father Dodu, between two couplets of a song; " I drink with a pastry-cook the same as with a prince."—" Where is the pastry-cook? " I asked.—" Why, next to you! This young man is anxious to set up a shop." My foster-brother seemed embarrassed: I

had taken in the situation.—It was my fate to have a foster-brother in a locality made illustrious by Rousseau, whose fad, by the way, was to suppress paid nurses! Father Dodu told me that Sylvie's marriage with the big curly boy was much talked about; the latter's ambition was to start a pastry business at Dammartin. I asked no more about it. The Nanteuil-le-Haudoin chaise brought me back to Paris the next day.

XIII

AURÉLIE

To Paris! It was a five hours' journey, and I was only anxious to arrive in the evening. At eight o'clock I was seated in the stall I usually occupied. Aurélie with her inspiration and charm gave life to lines that were a feeble imitation of Schiller by some poetaster of the period. She was sublime in the garden scene. During the fourth act, in which she did not appear, I went to buy a bouquet at Mme. Prévost's. Into it I slipped a very tender note signed: "A Stranger." "That will inaugurate my future plans," thought I, and next day I was off to Germany.

With what object?—I wanted to try to put my ideas in order. If I wrote a novel, I could never make readers accept the story of a heart captivated by two loves at the same time. I had lost Sylvie through my own fault; but seeing her for a single day had raised my self-respect: henceforth I placed her like a smiling statue in the Temple of Wisdom. One glance from her had saved me from rushing into an abyss.—I dismissed with still greater repulsion the idea of calling upon Aurélie, as the momentary rival of so many vulgar admirers who, after having shone a short time in the light of her presence, vanished broken-hearted.—"Some day we shall ascertain," thought I, "if this woman has a heart!"

One morning I read in the paper that Aurélie was ill. I wrote to her from the mountains of Salzburg. This letter

was so pervaded with German mysticism that I expected no great success from its pleading, and I did not ask her to reply. I reckoned somewhat on luck, and on the signature: "A Stranger." Months elapsed. During my excursions and idle moments I had undertaken to portray in a poetical drama the love of the poet Colonna for the beautiful Laura, who was made a nun by her parents, and whom he loved until his death. This subject was somewhat akin to my constant preoccupations. When I got to the last line, my sole idea was to return to France.

What can I say now that is not the story of so many others? I had passed through all the painful trials called dramatic. "I have eaten of the drum and drunk of the cymbal," as the apparently meaningless sentence in the Initiates of Eleusis has it.—It no doubt signifies that we must, if need be, exceed the limits of nonsense and absurdity: reason, for me, consisted in living up to my ideal and making it a reality.

Aurélie had accepted the principal part in the drama I had brought back from Germany. Never shall I forget the day when I was permitted to read the play to her. The love-scenes had been expressly written for her. I believe my reading was full of feeling, but even more, of enthusiasm. In the conversation that ensued I confessed that I was the *Stranger* who had signed the two letters. She said to me: "You are a madcap; but come to see me again. . . . I have never met anybody who knew how to love me."

O woman, thou seekest love. . . . And what else do *I* seek?

During the following days I wrote the most tender letters, no doubt the best she had ever received. Her replies were full of sense. Yet she gave way to feeling for a moment, told me to call and explained that it was difficult for her to break off a former attachment.—"If you love me for myself," she argued, "you will understand that I can only belong to one lover."

Two months later I received a most effusive letter and I

hurried to her side.—Meanwhile somebody had given me a precious piece of news: the handsome young man I had met one night at the club had just enlisted in the Algerian cavalry.

In the following summer there were races at Chantilly. The theatrical company of which Aurélie formed part was to perform there. During their stay in the locality the actors were under the manager's orders.—I had made friends with this honest fellow, who had formerly acted as Dorante in Marivaux's comedies. For a long time he had played the chief lover's part in dramas, and his last success had been in the play imitated from Schiller, when my opera glass had shown me his wrinkles. He appeared younger less close to, and as he had not grown stout he still produced some effect in the provinces; his ardour had not abated.

I accompanied the troupe in the quality of "mylord the poet," as I was called; I induced the manager to give performances at Senlis and Dammartin. At first he had felt inclined to go to Compiègne; but Aurélie was of my opinion. Next day, while negotiations went on with the owners of halls and with the authorities, I hired horses and we all made an excursion to the lakes of Commelle, intending to lunch at the château of the Reine Blanche. Aurélie in a riding-habit, with her fair hair flowing, crossed the forest like a queen of ancient days, the peasants gazing at her, dazzled by the brilliant sight. Mme. de F . . . was the only lady they had ever seen of such commanding appearance, of such grace when she bowed. After lunch we went down from the heights into villages recalling those in Switzerland, where the current of the Nonette gives motive power to the saw-mills. The places I loved for the memories they evoked interested her but superficially. I had planned to take Aurélie to the château near Orry, and to the green lawn where for the first time I had seen Adrienne. She did not betray the slightest emotion. So I told her everything: I confessed how my love had originated

at the theatre, had become a dream, and had now been completely realized by her. She listened to me coldly and said: "You do not love me. You simply want me to say to you: 'An actress is the same as a nun'; you are only after the subject of a play and are unable to find a proper *dénouement.* Have done! I no longer believe you!" Such cruel words at last opened my eyes. The strange enthusiasm I had felt so long, my dreams, tears, despair, tenderness, was all this not love? What then constitutes love?

Aurélie appeared on the stage at Senlis in the evening. I noticed that she betrayed a weakness for the manager, the wrinkled lover. He was a most good-natured man and had rendered her some services.

Aurélie had said to me one day: "There is the man who loves me."

XIV

THE LAST LEAF

Such are the absurd notions that delude us and lead us astray in the morning of life. I have tried to give an account of them without much order in my narrative; but many hearts will have understood me. We lose our illusions one after the other, as fruit sheds its skin—and that fruit is experience. Its taste is bitter, but its acridity is invigorating —pray excuse this old-fashioned style. Rousseau says that the sights of nature are the best consolation for us in all our troubles. Now and then I revisit the glades of Clarens, lost in mist to the north of Paris. How the district has changed!

Ermenonville! where the idylls of antiquity flourished erstwhile—retranslated from Gessner's version—thou hast lost thy solitary star, whose iridescence shed down upon me two different lights, a blue and a roseate one in turn, like deceitful Aldebaran representing alternately Adrienne or Sylvie—both halves of one single love, the first my sublime ideal, the other sweet reality. What matter to me hence-

forth thy shades and lakes and even thy Desert? Othys, Montagny, Loisy, poor neighbouring hamlets, Châalis—at present in the restorer's hands—nothing have you preserved of all the past! I sometimes yearn to see these haunts of solitude and reverie again. I sadly distinguish the fugitive traces of a period when even simplicity was an affectation.

Certain lines of Roucher, which had impressed me as sublime, make me smile when I read them now—or humanitarian maxims inscribed over a spring or a grotto sacred to Pan. The artificial lakes, created at such expense, in vain spread their stagnant waters disdained by the swan. Gone is the time when the Condé hunt went by with its proud amazons, when horns answered each other from afar, multiplied by echo! Nowadays there is no direct road to Ermenonville. I go there sometimes viâ Creil and Senlis, sometimes viâ Dammartin.

Dammartin is never reached before evening. I pass the night at the inn of the *Image of St. John*, where they generally give me quite a clean room, adorned with ancient tapestry; a pier-glass hangs above the mirror. This room offers the last display of bric-à-brac furniture, a fashion I have long discarded. You enjoy balmy sleep under the customary eiderdown. In the morning when I open the window encased in vine and climbing roses, I discover with rapture a verdant horizon ten leagues in extent, whose poplars fall into line like armies. A few villages are scattered here and there, overlooked by their pointed steeples of open-work which the country folks say were built with bones. We first distinguished Othys—then Eve, then Ver; we might make out Ermenonville if it had a steeple; but this philosophical centre has badly neglected its church. After filling my lungs with the pure air breathed on these heights, I gaily descend to go and pay a visit to the pastry-cook. "Here you are, big curly boy!"—"And you, little Parisian!"—We give each other friendly punches as we did in our childhood, and then I go up a certain staircase to be

welcomed by the joyous shouts of two children. "Happiness was perhaps here," I reflect; and yet . . .

I sometimes call her Lolotte, and she finds in me some resemblance with Werther, minus the pistols which are out of date. While the big curly boy attends to lunch, we take the children for a stroll in the avenues of lime trees that surround what remains of the castle's old brick walls. While the boys, on the archery ground of the Company of Archers, practise shooting their father's arrows at straw targets, we read some poems or a few pages of the short story-books that are no longer written.

I was forgetting to say that on the day Aurélie's company performed at Dammartin, I took Sylvie to the theatre and I asked her if she did not think the actress very much like a person she had once known.—"Like whom?"—"Do you remember Adrienne?"

She burst out laughing and replied: "What an idea!" Then she added, sighing, as a reproach to herself: "Poor Adrienne! she died at the convent of Saint-S . . . towards 1832."

ALEXANDRE DUMAS, *PÉRE*

(1803–1870)

THE BIRD OF FATE

(Translated by A. R. Allinson)

There lingers at Marseilles an ancient and solemn tradition, the origin of which is lost in the night of the ages, a tradition to the effect that wild pigeons occasionally fly over the region. Now, all the Marseillese, who like the men of Aigues-Mortes have retained of their many ancient municipal rights only that of carrying a gun, are sportsmen. In the North, where people lead active lives, a sportsman goes after his quarry, and, provided he bags it, has no reason to suppose that the trouble he has taken will in any degree deprive him of the good opinion of his countrymen. In the South, on the contrary, that land of indolence, he waits for the game; there, in the South, the game has to come to man, for is not man lord of the creation?

Thence has arisen the fabulous tradition of the flights of wild pigeons.

All the more knowing sportsmen of Marseilles have shooting-posts. These are little retreats partly dug in the ground, the earth which is excavated being heaped up so as to form low walls, over which numerous branches with withering leaves are strewn as roofing. On either side of these huts, as one may call them, stand two or three pines, near the summits of which some long, bare spars stretch out like skeletons, two, as a rule, being placed horizontally, and a third vertically.

Before daybreak, every Sunday morning, the sporting

gentlemen of Marseilles usually install themselves in their burrows, so arranging their branches that only their heads protrude; and even these are generally disguised by caps of a faded green, which blends wonderfully well with the hue of the withering boughs. Thus the Marseillese sportsman is invisible to every eye excepting that of the Lord.

If the sportsman be a sybarite he seats himself on a stool in his retreat, but if he be a plucky fellow of the right sort he simply crouches on his knees.

He is patient because he is eternal,—*patiens quia æternus.*

He waits, then, patiently.

For what does he wait? I may be asked.

Well, in ordinary times the Marseillese sportsman waits for thrushes, blackbirds, ortolans, fig-peckers, red-breasts, or other small birds, for his ambition never rises to quails. As for the partridge, he regards that as a phœnix; he believes, for he has heard it said, that there is but one in the world, which rises anew from its ashes, and appears from time to time, before or after great catastrophes, to announce the displeasure or clemency of the Divinity. That is all. We will not speak of the hare; it is admitted at Marseilles that the hare is a fabulous animal after the fashion of the unicorn.

Now, as the thrushes, blackbirds, ortolans, fig-peckers and red-breasts have no motive to perch voluntarily on the pines, where they are expected, the Marseillese sportsman is generally attended by a boy carrying various cages, in each of which one of the birds enumerated is imprisoned. These captives, acquired by purchase at the port, are of both sexes, the males being designed to call the lady birds. and the females the gentlemen.

The cages are hung on the lower branches of the pines, and the captive birds call the free ones. It is expected that these unfortunates, deceived by the call, will perch on the horizontal spars, but it must be admitted that this seldom happens.

The sportsman, however, waits for it to occur. If he be skilful, he then shoots the birds; and if he be clumsy, he misses them. As a rule the Marseillese sportsman is clumsy, skill being the result of practice.

Méry has calculated that the Marseillese sportsman visits his post once a week, that one day every week a bird perches on the spars, and that of every eight birds doing so he shoots one. It follows that, allowing for the cost of land, fire-arms, ammunition, decoys and so forth, each of the birds thus bagged represents a sum of from £20 to £24. But, as an offset to this expense, whenever a Marseillese sportsman does manage to shoot a bird, he is regarded by his family as being as mighty a hunter as Nimrod.

On extraordinary occasions, that is when a flight of wild pigeons is expected, the Marseillese sportsman simply takes a decoy pigeon to his post, and by means of a string fastens it to a perpendicular pole, around which it is compelled to fly incessantly, the pole tapering to so sharp a point that the poor bird cannot perch on it, and the string being too short to allow it to rest upon the horizontal spars. This ceaseless fluttering is expected to attract the more or less numerous flocks of pigeons which are supposed to pass over Marseilles on their way from Africa to Kamtchatka.

If any pigeons were to pass they would probably be alive to the stratagem, but the Marseillese sportsman acknowledges ingenuously that he has never seen one. This, however, does not prevent him from declaring that the alleged flights really take place.

After four Sundays or so, the first decoy pigeon dies of exhaustion, and as the flights of wild pigeons are supposed to last three months, that is from October 1 till the end of December, the sportsman incurs the risk of three more decoys.

It must be added that in the meantime he bags nothing, for all other birds are frightened, scared away by the fluttering of the decoy.

As a rule the Marseillese sportsman remains from six to eight hours in his hut, that is from four o'clock in the morning until noon. There are even some madmen who take their breakfast and dinners with them, and only return to their *bastide* in the evening to play a game of Loto. Loto is wonderfully well suited to wind up a day begun at a shooting-post.

I asked Méry if he could make me acquainted with one of the sportsmen I have mentioned. They seemed to me to constitute a distinct species, which it would be interesting to study. In reply, Méry promised that he would avail himself of the first opportunity that might occur.

All the foregoing explanations were given me as I climbed the steps of Notre Dame de la Garde, from whose heights the view ranges over Marseilles and its environs. I counted about one hundred and fifty shooting-posts spread over a square league of ground.

During the hour I spent in climbing to Notre Dame de la Garde, the three-quarters of an hour which I spent in descending, and the hour and a quarter which elapsed while I was on the height, that is three hours altogether, I heard two shots fired. This corresponded with Méry's calculation.

I was not disturbed, then, in my religious and archæological investigations.

Notre Dame de la Garde is both a fort and a church. The fort is held in great contempt by engineers, the church in great veneration by mariners.

It was of the fort that Chapelle and Bachaumont wrote:

> "Gouvernement commode et beau,
> Auquel suffit pour toute garde,
> Un Suisse avec sa hallebarde,
> Peint sur la porte du château."

Which proves that the fort of Notre Dame de la Garde has in all times virtually guarded itself, unless, indeed, those epigrammatic lines were directed less against the

castle itself than against its governor, who, at the period when they were written, was M. de Scudéri, brother of the tenth Muse; for, as is judiciously indicated in that Marseillese guide, which I denounce to its fellows as containing more wit than all others put together, in each and every age there has always been a tenth Muse in France.

The result of the veneration in which the church has remained, and the discredit into which the fort has fallen, is that nowadays the latter's only advanced works are images of the Virgin, and its only garrison, penitents. True, if you judge by the number of offerings hanging in the chapel, few such miracle-working Virgins as Notre Dame de la Garde exist, for which reason all Provençal mariners have recourse to her when they encounter a storm. On the returning fine weather, according to the more or less terrible character of the storm, and the mariner's degree of alarm, he brings her, barefooted, crawling on his knees, whatever object he may have vowed to present to her. Once a vow has been made it is piously fulfilled; never, perhaps, has there been a case of a seaman, however poor, failing to keep his promise. At the utmost, if in making his vow he did not positively specify the metal of which his offering would be composed, he may give pewter instead of silver, and brass instead of gold.

A look-out post on the highest point of the fort signals the approach of every ship coming to Marseilles.

From the summit of the height of Notre Dame, as I have said already, the view ranges over Marseilles and its environs; you can see all the thousands of *bastides* which form as it were a scattered town around the compact city.

The fact is that every inhabitant of Marseilles owns a *bastide*. Many, who have no town-house, have a country one. And as each usually repairs thither on foot, he chooses as site a spot as near as possible to the gate by which he is accustomed to leave the city. In order that the houses

may be within a convenient distance for their owners, they have to be set somewhat closely. But nothing can be less exacting than a *bastide*. It requires neither court nor garden. Sometimes four *bastides* can count but one tree between them, and those are not the least favourably circumstanced.

We descended from Notre Dame de la Garde and repaired to the Port des Catalans. This is one of the curious sights of Marseilles.

One day a mysterious colony took up its quarters on an uninhabited strip of land at the edge of a small creek. It asked the city of Marseilles for permission to make the creek its port and the promontory its town. The city granted the permission solicited by these sea-rovers, who, ever since, have remained there, dwelling in strangely-built houses, speaking an unknown tongue, marrying among themselves, and hauling up their little boats on to the sand every evening, like the mariners of Virgil's time.

For a century or two, however, the little colony has been dwindling every year. In another half-century, perhaps, it will have disappeared, even as everything strange or picturesque disappears. Our civilization holds everything that is not of its own precise level, whether it be above or below it, in horror. And it is civilization which is killing the poor Catalans.

We separated after arranging to meet again at the theatre in the evening. After the performance we were to sup at Sybillot's restaurant. Méry left me for the purpose of ordering the repast and finding such a sportsman as I desired to meet.

I reached the theatre at the appointed time, and there, awaiting me, I found my friend Jadin, the animal-painter, with Méry and three or four others. I immediately asked Méry whether he had found the promised sportsman.

"Oh! yes," he answered, "and a fine one, too!"

"You are sure he won't escape?" said I.

"Oh! he has no desire to do so. I told him that you had hunted lions in Algeria and tigers in the pampas."

"And where is he now?"

"Yonder, playing in the orchestra?"

"What, the third bass-player?"

"No, the fourth, do you see him?"

"Certainly."

"Well, that is the man."

"It is astonishing!"

"He does not look like a sportsman, does he?"

"Indeed, no."

"Well, no matter, you will tell me your opinion of him by and by."

Reassured by this promise, I directed my attention to the performance.

The Marseilles theatre is neither better nor worse than others. Comedy is played there rather better than it is at Tours, opera rather worse than at Lyons, melodrama much as one sees it at the Folies-Dramatiques, and *vaudeville* as it is played everywhere.

That evening, it so chanced, there was a full house. A little Italian company, after performing at Nice, had crossed the Var and come to sing Rossini's airs at Marseilles, where it was reaping great success. As the Marseillese speak Provençal, they imagine that they like Italian music.

As I am not music-mad myself, and the fear of losing a few notes was not great enough to turn me from my everlasting investigations, I raised my eyes in search of Réatu's famous ceiling, of which I had heard so much praise. It represents Apollo and the Muses flinging flowers upon Time; and however old-fashioned may be its subject, it really deserves its reputation, and is one of the things which the visitor to Marseilles ought to see. Only, I do not advise my friends to do so on the day when an opera is being played.

Directly the performance of "Semeramide" was over—of course "Semiramide" was the opera played!—Méry

made a sign to the fourth bass, who responded by a similar one. Méry's gesture signified: "We shall wait for you at Sybillot's;" and the other: "I must take my instrument home, but I will be with you in five minutes." Two deaf mutes could not have said more in less time.

We had scarcely reached Sybillot's, when our sportsman, whose name was Louet, arrived. Méry introduced us, and we then sat down to supper. Throughout the repast Méry, Jadin and myself strove to establish a cordial understanding. We each told some extravagant anecdotes; but Monsieur Louet spoke never a word. It appears, indeed, that nothing sharpens the appetite so much as the horizontal movement of one hand and the perpendicular movement of the other while a man is playing the 'cello. True, our musician listened to everything, and although he did not speak for fear of losing a bite, he nodded his approval of the exploits we recounted, and even gave a little nasal grunt of satisfaction when an anecdote seemed to him particularly interesting. All the same, his prolonged silence caused me to glance reproachfully at Méry, who thereupon signed that I must allow the man time to satisfy his appetite, and I should lose nothing by waiting.

Indeed, after the dessert, Monsieur Louet gave vent to an exclamation, which seemed to signify: "Well, I have made a good supper." Méry at once understood that the right moment had come, and he therefore ordered a bowl of punch and some cigars. At a distance of two hundred leagues from Paris, punch was then still regarded as the proper complement to a bachelor's supper.

Monsieur Louet threw himself back in his chair, scrutinized us all as if he now saw us for the first time, and smiled benevolently. Then with a soft sigh of satisfaction such as comes from a satiated gourmand, he muttered: "Yes, I have had an excellent supper."

"Try a cigar, Monsieur Louet, it is capital for one's digestion," said Méry.

"No thank you, my illustrious poet," Monsieur Louet replied, "I never smoke. But if these gentlemen will allow it I will accept a glass of punch."

"Allow it, Monsieur Louet! Why it has been ordered expressly to please you."

"You are too kind, gentlemen."

"Well, as you do not smoke, Monsieur Louet——"

"No, I never smoke! In my young days, gentlemen, people never smoked. The habit was introduced into France by the Cossacks at the same time as boots. For my part I have always worn shoes, and remained faithful to my snuff-box. I am a patriot, I am!"

Thus speaking, Monsieur Louet, produced a snuff-box decorated with a miniature; but only Méry, by way of humouring him, would take a pinch. "This is excellent rappee, Monsieur Louet," he said, "I am sure it can be no Government stuff."

"Yes, yes, it is; only I mix it myself, according to a secret recipe given me by a Cardinal when I was in Rome."

"Have you been to Rome then?" I inquired.

"Yes, Monsieur. I dwelt there for nineteen or twenty years."

"Ah! Monsieur Louet," Méry now resumed, "as you don't smoke, you ought to tell these gentlemen the story of your adventure with the *chastre*."

"What is a *chastre?*" I innocently inquired.

"A *chastre!*" Méry replied. "You don't know what a *chastre* is! I say, Monsieur Louet, he knows nothing about the *chastre* and yet he claims to be a sportsman. Why, the *chastre*, my friend, is a bird of omen, of fate, the *rara avis* of the Latin satirist."

"It somewhat resembles a blackbird," said Monsieur Louet, "and it is excellent eating when it is roasted."

"Well, tell us your adventure with the *chastre!*" Méry exclaimed once more.

"Oh! I only desire to make myself agreeable to the company," Monsieur Louet graciously replied.

"Listen, then, gentlemen!" said Méry. "You are about to hear an account of one of the most extraordinary sporting adventures that ever befell anybody since the days of Nimrod. I, myself, have heard the tale a score of times, and I always renew my acquaintance with it with fresh pleasure. Come, let Monsieur Louet have a second glass of punch. There!——Kindly begin, Monsieur Louet, for we are all attention."

"You are aware, gentlemen," said our new friend, "that every Marseillese is a born sportsman."

"Why, yes!" Méry interrupted, after puffing at his cigar. "It is a physiological problem which I have never been able to explain, but none the less things are as you say. Truly, the designs of Providence are inscrutable."

"Well," continued Monsieur Louet, "unluckily, or perhaps luckily, for they are regarded as scourges of humanity, there are no lions or tigers in the vicinity of Marseilles; but fortunately there are the flights of wild pigeons——"

"Eh?" Méry exclaimed. "I told you so, my dear Dumas. They insist on it."

"Certainly we do," resumed Monsieur Louet, who was plainly nettled, "certainly we do. And whatever you may say, the flights take place. Besides, didn't you lend me the other day Monsieur Cooper's book *The Pioneers* in which the pigeon flights are described——?"

"Ah! yes, in America!"

"Well, if the pigeons fly over America why shouldn't they fly over Marseilles? The ships which sail to America from Alexandria and America call at Marseilles, don't they?"

"That is true," said Méry, staggered by the blow. "I have nothing more to say. Why didn't I think of that before! Give me your hand, Monsieur Louet, I will never contradict you on that subject again."

"Oh! discussion is allowable, Monsieur."

"True, but I close it. Pray proceed, Monsieur Louet."

"I was saying then, gentlemen, that if we have no lions or tigers, we have the flights of wild pigeons."

For a moment Monsieur Louet paused, to see if Méry would contradict him again. But Méry nodded assent, and said: "That is true. They have the flights of pigeons."

Satisfied with this acknowledgment, Monsieur Louet resumed: "You will understand that a sportsman does not allow such a season as that to pass without repairing to his shooting-post every morning. I say every morning, for I can fortunately dispose of my mornings, as my avocation only requires my presence at the theatre in the evening. Well, one morning in 1810 or 1811, when I was about five-and-thirty years old, gentlemen, and more active than I am now,—though, thank Heaven, I still enjoy excellent health,—I betook myself as usual to my shooting-post before daybreak. A decoy-pigeon was fastened to one of my poles, and was fluttering hither and thither, when, all at once, by the light of the stars, I thought I saw something settle on one of my pine trees. Unluckily there was not light enough for me to distinguish whether it was a bat or a bird. I kept quiet, the creature, curiously enough, did the same, and I waited for sunrise, fully prepared for whatever might happen.

"At the first ray of light I saw that the creature was a bird. I therefore gently raised my gun to my shoulder, and when I had carefully taken aim I pressed the trigger. But, most unluckily, gentlemen, I had loaded the gun the previous day and forgotten to discharge it. It consequently hung fire. Nevertheless, from the manner in which the bird flew off I could tell that it was hit. I watched it till I saw it alight; then, on glancing at my spars, I discovered to my astonishment that my shot had actually severed the string securing my decoy-pigeon, which also had flown away. Having thus lost it, I felt that I should

also lose my time if I persisted in remaining at my post. So I decided to pursue the *chastre*, for I forgot to tell you, gentlemen, and this is important, that the bird I had fired at was a *chastre*.

"Unluckily I had no dog. At a shooting-post, as you will understand, a dog is not only useless, but usually proves a dreadful nuisance. In my case, however, having none to help me, I had to beat the bushes myself in search of the bird. It had hopped some distance, and I thought it still farther away, when to my astonishment, it rose again behind me. I turned on hearing the whir of its wings, and fired at it as it flew off. This was waste of powder, as you will readily understand. Nevertheless, I saw some feathers fly."

"You saw some feathers fly?" said Méry, interrupting.

"Yes, Monsieur, and I even picked one up and placed it in my buttonhole."

"If you saw feathers fly," Méry resumed, "the *chastre* was certainly hit."

"That was my opinion. I had not lost sight of it, so I started in pursuit. And though it was virtually out of range I sent it a parting shot, for one can never tell what merely one grain of lead may do."

"It would not suffice for a *chastre*," said Méry, shaking his head, "that bird dies remarkably hard."

"True," replied Monsieur Louet, "mine, for instance, had been wounded by both of my first shots—I am sure of it—yet it rose again, and flew quite a thousand yards. But as it had alighted, I swore I would overtake it, so I continued the pursuit. Ah! the rascal! It well knew what sort of customer it had to deal with! It always rose at a distance of fifty or sixty yards. Nevertheless, whether it were out of gunshot or not, I fired every time. I felt quite tigerish. If I had held the impudent bird I believe I should have devoured it then and there. As a matter of fact, I was very hungry; but, luckily, as it had been my intention to remain

at my shooting-post all day, I had brought my breakfast and dinner in my game bag. So I ate as I ran on."

"Excuse me!" now said Méry, interrupting Monsieur Louet once more, "just one remark. You see, my dear Dumas, the difference which exists between the sportsman of Northern France and the sportsman of the South. It is shown, as you will have noticed, by Monsieur Louet's own words. The sportsman of the North leaves home with his game bag empty and brings it back full; whereas the sportsman of the South sets out with his bag full and returns with it empty. And, now, pray continue your story, my dear Monsieur Louet, I have finished." Thereupon Méry lovingly pressed his cigar-stump between his lips.

* * * * * *

"Where was I?" inquired Monsieur Louet, who had lost the thread of his discourse in consequence of Méry's interruption.

"You were scouring hills and plains in pursuit of your *chastre*."

"That is true. It was vitriol, not blood, that I now had in my veins! We hot-headed men of the South become ferocious when we lose our tempers, and I had entirely lost mine. That impudent *chastre* seemed a very witch, and might even have been taken for Prince Camaralzaman's bird. At last, leaving the villages of Cassino and La Crotal on my right, I reached the plain spreading from Ligne to St. Cyr. For fifteen hours I kept up the pursuit, bearing now to the right and now to the left. If I had travelled as the crow flies I should certainly have gone farther than Toulon. As it was, my legs began to fail me. That devil of a *chastre* did not show again, and night was approaching. Barely another half-hour of daylight remained for me to overtake the obstinate bird. I vowed to Notre Dame de la Garde that I would hang a *chastre* of massive silver in her chapel if I could only capture the one I was pursuing. But, possibly because I was not a mariner, she showed no sign of

having even heard me. Night approached nearer and nearer, and at last, in my despair, I sent a final shot after the bird. It must have actually heard the lead whistle on that occasion, for it flew so far that, though I never took my eyes off it, it vanished into the twilight, in the direction of the village of St. Cyr. Well, I thought, there could be no question of returning to Marseilles at that hour; and so I made up my mind to sleep at St. Cyr. Fortunately, it was an off-night at the theatre.

"I felt famished by the time I reached the inn of the Black Eagle, where I asked the landlord, an old gentleman, an old acquaintance of mine, to let me have some supper and a bed. Then I told him my adventure, and he became anxious to know where it was I had lost sight of the *chastre*. I indicated the spot as well as I could; and, after a moment's thought, he said to me: 'The bird must be in the moor-land on the right-hand side of the high-road.'

"'Quite so!' said I. 'It was there I lost it. If the moon were only shining I would show you the very spot.'

"'Yes, yes,' said he, 'that's a favourite nesting-place for *chastres*.'

"'Indeed!'

"'Yes, and to-morrow at daybreak, if you are willing, we will go with my dog and start the bird.'

"'Of course I am willing. I don't mean to be done in this fashion by a paltry *chastre*. Do you think we shall find it?'

"'Certainly we shall.'

"'Then I shall sleep comfortably. But mind you don't go to the spot without me.'

"'Why, what do you take me for?' he answered.

"Well, as I did not desire any recurrence of the mishap which had befallen me that morning I unloaded and washed out my gun. It was foul, gentlemen, and no mistake! Why, I had fired quite fifty times during the day; and, if grains of lead only germinated like grains of wheat, there would

have been a fine crop growing between Marseilles and St. Cyr. However, I placed my gun-barrel in the chimney corner so that it might dry during the night. Then I supped, went to bed, and slept soundly till five in the morning, when the landlord roused me.

"I intended to return to Marseilles by the road I had taken the previous day, and so, to provide myself with a snack, I had slipped the remains of my supper into my game-bag. I had a right to do so, gentlemen, for I had paid for the meal. Well, I slung my bag over my shoulder, went downstairs, set my gun to rights, and, for the purpose of reloading it, opened my powder flask. Gentlemen, it was empty!

"Fortunately, my host had a supply of ammunition, and sportsmen, as you are aware, often avail themselves of one another's powder and shot. So I accepted some of my host's powder, proved my gun, and loaded it. I ought to have noticed, at the time, that something was amiss by the grain of the powder, but I gave it no heed. We set off, the landlord, myself, and Soliman. The landlord's dog was named Soliman."

"What is the name of yours, Monsieur Jadin?"

"His name is Milord," Jadin replied.

"A pretty name," said Monsieur Louet, bowing, "but my landlord's dog was called Soliman, not Milord. All the same, he was a very fine animal, for we had barely reached the moorland when he began to point.

"'There's your *chastre*,' said my landlord.

"I drew near, looked ahead on a line with his nose, and saw my *chastre*, gentlemen, only three steps away. I immediately took aim.

"'Why! what are you about!' cried the innkeeper, 'you will blow it to smithereens! It's murder! Besides, you may pepper my dog at the same time.'

"'True,' I replied, and I withdrew to a distance of ten paces, just a nice shot. Soliman seemed rooted to the

ground. You might have taken him for the dog of Cephalus. The dog of Cephalus was changed to stone, as Monsieur Dumas must know."

"No, I did not know it," I answered, smiling.

"Ah !—Well, that animal, it seems, experienced that dreadful fate."

"Poor thing!" said Méry.

"But let me return to Soliman. He was pointing marvellously well, and I feel sure he would still have been there, gentlemen, if his master had not suddenly shouted: 'At it! at it!' When the dog heard those words he sprang forward, and the *chastre* flew up! I covered it, covered it as never *chastre* was covered before! I had it at the very muzzle of my gun, so to say. I fired. Alas! the innkeeper's powder had been spoilt by exposure! Spoilt by exposure! I did not even touch the bird!

"'Well, friend,' said my host, 'if you do that *chastre* no more injury than you have done it now, it may lead you all the way to Rome!'

"'To Rome!' said I. 'Well, even if I have to follow it to Rome, I'll do so. Besides, I have always desired to see Rome, and the Pope too. And if I choose to see him, you, at all events, won't hinder me!'

"I was furious, as you will readily understand. Had he answered me a single word I believe I should have let him taste the contents of my second barrel. But instead of arguing, he merely said: 'Oh, you may go where you like! Good-bye, and a pleasant journey. Shall I lend you my dog? You can return him on your way back.'

"That pacified me. The offer of such a fine pointer was not to be refused. 'Well, yes, I'm willing,' I answered.

"'Then call him—Soliman, Soliman! Go and follow that gentleman.'

"Everyone knows that a pointer will follow any sportsman who calls him. So Soliman followed me. We set off. That animal was instinct incarnate. He had seen the

chastre alight again, and he went straight to the spot. I could not see the bird myself, but I was determined to show it no mercy even if I should have to pulverize it. I had no luck, however; while I was stooping and searching, that devil of a bird flew off once more. I fired at it twice, discharging both barrels of my gun, gentlemen. Bang! bang! But the powder was bad, absolutely bad. Soliman looked at me as much as to ask: 'What is the meaning of this?' I felt quite humiliated by his glance, though of course the mishap was not my fault; and I answered, just as if the animal could understand me: 'That's nothing, nothing. Wait a bit, and you shall see.' You might have thought, gentlemen, that he did understand me. He started off once more, and ten minutes later he came to a halt. He remained as still as if he had been turned into a block of stone—a veritable block of stone. There was my *chastre* again! I stepped forward in a line with my dog's nose, as lightly, as gingerly as if I had been treading a sheet of red-hot iron; and yet that bird passed between my legs, literally between my legs! The fact is I no longer had any self-possession. I fired my first shot too near, the lead did not scatter at all, but passed, bullet-like, beside the bird; and the second time, as I was too far away, the lead scattered too much, and the impudent creature flew right through it.

"Then one of those things happened, gentlemen, which only my deep respect for the truth induces me to mention. Soliman, that sagacious animal, not only gave me a withering glance, but marked his contempt for me in a manner I will not describe. Suffice it to say that immediately afterwards he trotted away homeward. As you will understand, if that outrageous insult had come from one of my fellow-beings, instead of from a mere dumb quadruped, destitute of reason, I should not have left it unnoticed. I should have taken his life or he would have taken mine. As it was, the insult increased my fury. I vowed I would

kill that *chastre*, happen what might; and, as you may imagine, from that moment, I forgot Marseilles completely. Following my bird from spot to spot, wherever it alighted, I at last got to—— Guess, gentlemen, where I got to? Why, to Hyères.

"I had never seen Hyères before, but I recognized it immediately by its orange trees. I am very fond of oranges and I resolved to rest and eat some. Besides, I really needed some cooling refreshment, for such a journey as I had made heats the blood to boiling point. I was now fourteen leagues from Marseilles, two days' journey! But I had long wished to visit Hyères and pluck oranges from the bough. So I mentally consigned that provoking *chastre* to a nameless place, particularly as I began to regard it as being really bewitched. I had seen it fly over the town-wall and alight in a garden; but who, pray, could find a *chastre* in a garden? Without a dog, too? Why, one might as well search for a needle in a bundle of hay!

"With a sigh then I repaired to an inn where I asked for some supper and permission to eat some oranges in the garden while the meal was being prepared. Of course, I did not mean to partake of the fruit without payment. I expected to be charged for it in my bill. The permission I asked was granted, and as I did not feel so tired as on the previous evening—which showed me that I might soon accustom my limbs to exertion—I went into the garden at once. The month was October, the best time for oranges, and I saw quite two hundred orange trees before me. The place suggested the Garden of the Hesperides, fortunately without the dragon. I had only to stretch out my arm to pluck an orange as big as my head, and I had begun to devour one—as a Norman devours an apple—when, all at once, I heard these notes: 'Pi, pi, piiiii, pi!'"

"That is the song of the *chastre*; it is as if you heard the bird itself piping," Méry remarked, as he helped himself to another cigar.

" I stooped," Monsieur Louet resumed, " and by a ray of light coming from the constellation of the Great Bear, I saw, midway between the Great Bear and myself, my identical *chastre*, perched on a lofty laurel bush, gentlemen, only fifteen steps away. I instinctively stretched out my hand for my gun. Alas! I had left it indoors, in the chimney-corner. I could picture it standing idly there; and so, pointing at the *chastre* with my fingers, I muttered: 'Yes, you scamp, you are happy, you may sing; but I would make you sing a very different tune if I only had my gun.' "

" But why did you not go and fetch it? " I asked.

" I dared not, for fear lest the impudent bird should fly off to some unknown spot. I had a different plan. I thought to myself—just observe this reasoning—' I have ordered supper, it will be ready sooner or later, and then the innkeeper will look for me. He knows that I am in the garden, and directly he arrives I shall say to him: " Friend, just be good enough to fetch my gun." ' You understand? "

" Hum," said Méry, " it was well thought out."

" Well, still remaining in a crouching posture, I continued to watch my bird. It piped, it preened its feathers, it made its toilet for the night. But I suddenly heard some footsteps behind me, whereupon I waved my hand by way of enjoining silence. The innkeeper, for it was he, drew nearer. ' Look yonder in that direction,' I whispered.

" ' Ah! ' said he, ' that is a *chastre*.'

" ' Hush! ' I retorted, ' go and fetch me my gun.'

" ' What for? ' he inquired.

" ' Fetch me my gun, I say.'

" ' Do you want to shoot that bird, then? ' he asked.

" ' Yes, indeed, it's my mortal enemy! '

" ' But it can't be done.'

" ' Why not? '

" ' Because it's too late.'

"'Too late! Why is it too late?'

"'Because anybody firing a gun within the town after the Angelus is liable to a fine of three francs twelve sous, and two days' imprisonment besides!'

"'Never mind!' said I, 'I'll pay the fine, I'll go to prison! Bring me my gun!'

"'So that I may be charged as your accomplice?' the innkeeper retorted. 'No, no, wait till daylight to-morrow.'

"'To-morrow, you stupid!' I rejoined in a louder voice than was prudent, for the bird was very near me, 'to-morrow, why, it will be gone.'

"'Well, there are plenty of others.'

"'But I want this one and none other! Are you aware that I have followed the rascal all the way from Marseilles, that I mean to have it dead or alive, to pluck it, and eat it, and do whatever I choose with it? Once more, fetch me my gun!'

"'No, I have told you already I won't. I have no wish to go to prison for your sake.'

"'Very well, then, I will fetch it myself.'

"'Go if you like, but I warn you that you won't find your *chastre* when you return!'

"'You are dastard enough to scare it away!' I exclaimed, catching the innkeeper by the collar.

"'P-r-r-r-r-r-o-u-u-u!' he began, but I clapped my hand to his lips.

"'Well, no, I'll tell you what,' said I, 'fetch me my gun, and I give you my word of honour that I won't fire before the Angelus rings to-morrow morning. My word of honour, as an honest man! Won't that satisfy you? Fetch my gun, I'll spend the night here, and to-morrow at the last sound of the bell, bang! I'll shoot.'

"'Pooh! A sportsman's word of honour, indeed! I know a better plan.'

"'What is that? Tell me quick. Just look at the impudent bird. It is positively deriding us!'

"'Well, stay here if it pleases you. Some supper shall be brought; you shall want for nothing, and if you should desire to sleep, you will have the grass at your disposal.'

"'Sleep! Ah! you don't know me. I shan't take a wink. Why, the bird might fly away while I was dreaming.'

"'Well, to-morrow——'

"'To-morrow?'

"'Yes, to-morrow morning, directly the Angelus rings, I will bring you your gun.'

"'Innkeeper!' exclaimed I, 'you are taking an unfair advantage of me!'

"'Oh, you are free to refuse or accept.'

"'And you won't fetch me my gun now, eh? Once, twice, thrice.'

"'No, I won't.'

"'Then go for my supper, and make as little noise as possible when you bring it.'

"'Oh! you need have no fear. As the bird hasn't been scared away by all the noise we have been making, it is not likely to stir until to-morrow. Look, it is going to sleep!'

"Indeed, gentlemen, the impudent creature was tucking its head under its wing. As you may know, nearly all birds sleep in that fashion. And as this one had its head tucked under its wing, and could not see me, if it had been within my reach instead of being perched at a height of fifteen feet from the ground, I might have grasped it in its slumber, even as I grasp this glass of punch. Unfortunately, it was placed too high, so I could only seat myself on the grass and await the landlord's return. He kept his word, he was an honest man, I must admit it. His wine, too, was of a good sort, if not so good as what you have provided this evening, gentlemen; and his supper was a comforting one. It could not be compared with to-night's, but then that has been a Belshazzar's feast, whereas his was merely an inn supper."

We bowed in recognition of Monsieur Louet's compliment.

"But ah! how weak a creature is man!" he resumed; "I had scarcely finished my supper in the garden when I began to feel sleepy. My eyes closed in spite of all my endeavours to keep them open. I rubbed them, I pinched my legs, I bit my little finger, but nothing availed me. I was fagged out, so I felt that I might as well sleep, and indeed I did so.

"While I was in that state I began to dream that the big laurel bush, on which my *chastre* was perched, was sinking into the ground,—as the trees do at the Marseilles theatre when there is a change of scenery. Have you been on the stage there, Monsieur Dumas? Its machinery is perfect. The other day they were performing 'Le Monstre,' Monsieur Aniel, of the Porte St. Martin, playing the title-rôle. You may have known Monsieur Aniel, perhaps?"

I nodded to signify that I had that advantage.

"Well," said Monsieur Louet, "I wished to speak to him, and directly the curtain was lowered I ran to the stage. Ah! Monsieur, I did not think of the trap-door by which he had just disappeared. Flop! Down I went by the very same trap! I thought I should be pulverized, but luckily the mattress was still in position. At that very moment a stage-carpenter came up to remove it, and found me with my legs in the air.

"'You are looking for Monsieur Aniel, are you not?' the man asked. 'He came down this way a moment ago and must now be in his dressing-room.'

"'Thanks, my good fellow,' I answered. And on going to the dressing-room I indeed found Monsieur Aniel there. I have mentioned this just to show you how perfect is the machinery of the Marseilles theatre.

"Well, I was dreaming that the bush on which my *chastre* had found a perch was sinking into the ground, in such wise that I was at last able to set my hand on the wretched bird. The idea thrilled me to such a degree that I gave a start and suddenly awoke.

" The bird was still in the same place, and I did not yield to sleep again. I heard two o'clock, three o'clock, and then four o'clock strike. The dawn rose. The *chastre* awoke, and once more I was on thorns. When, at last, the first chimes of the Angelus fell on my ears my emotion became so keen that I could scarcely breathe.

" My host kept faith with me. The Angelus was only half-tolled when he appeared, carrying my gun. Without taking my eyes off the bird, I stretched out my right arm and beckoned eagerly to the innkeeper. But it was only at the last stroke of the bell that he gave me my weapon. And extraordinary as it may seem, gentlemen, at that same moment the *chastre* raised a faint chirp—and flew away!

" I rushed to the garden-wall, clung to it and scaled it. At that moment I would have climbed the highest steeple in France! The bird alighted in a hemp field. It had not yet breakfasted, gentlemen, and it hearkened to the voice of nature. Throwing a crown to the innkeeper in payment for my supper, I leapt from the wall and ran towards the field. All my thoughts were so concentrated on the bird that I did not perceive a Garde Champêtre who followed me. Thus it happened that, just as I had reached the middle of the field and was about to start the bird, I felt somebody sieze me by the collar. I turned: it was the Garde Champêtre.

" ' In the name of the law! ' said he, ' come with me to the mayor's.'

" At that identical moment the *chastre* once more took flight.

" Had I been surrounded by a regiment of grenadiers, I would have charged them all in pursuit of my bird! I knocked the Garde Champêtre down without the slightest ceremony, as if he had been a mere scarecrow, and then rushed from that inhospitable spot. Fortunately the *chastre* had flown a long distance so that I was soon far away

from my antagonist. When I reached the place where the bird had alighted, I was so breathless, I shook with such intense emotion, that I could not even take aim. But, as I said to the *chastre :* 'A game postponed is not necessarily lost.'

"I continued the pursuit; I tramped and tramped all day, gentlemen, and this time, unfortunately, my game-bag was empty. I was reduced, therefore, to eating wild fruit, and drinking such water as the brooks supplied. So intense was the heat that perspiration streamed from my forehead. I panted, I must have looked hideous. At last I reached a river-bed in which there was no water."

"It was the Var," Méry interrupted.

"You are right, Monsieur, it was the Var, exhausted by the drought. I crossed it, never imagining that I was setting foot on a foreign soil. But that was of no account. I could see my *chastre* hopping along some two hundred paces in advance of me, and now there was not a single blade of grass in which it could hide. I drew near to it with wolfish stealth, aiming at it every dozen paces. But it still kept beyond gunshot, when, all at once, a hawk, which had been circling overhead, dropped like a stone; seized my *chastre*, and disappeared with it in its clutches!

"I was overwhelmed, gentlemen. And now for the first time I began to feel a hundred pains. My body was covered with injuries which I had received while scrambling through the briars of the wayside. Besides, the wild-fruit diet, with which I had tried to lull my appetite, did not agree with me at all. I sank down by the roadside, utterly overcome.

"At last a peasant passed. 'My friend,' I said to him. 'is there any town or village or shelter-place of any kind in the vicinity?'

"'*Gnor, si*,' he answered in the Italian of the Riviera, '*cé la citta di Nizza un miglia avanti*—Yes, sir, the city of Nice lies a mile ahead.'

"I was in Italy, gentlemen, and at that time I knew not

a word of the language. And all this had befallen me on account of a cursed *chastre*."

* * * * * * *

"There was only one course for me to take. I rose as well as I could, using my gun as a staff, and I spent an hour and a half in walking the mile which separated me from Nice. Previously I had been sustained by hope alone, and now, hope having forsaken me, I felt weak indeed.

"At last I reached the town, and asked the first person I met to direct me to a good inn, for, as you will understand, I was in great need of sustenance. Luckily, the person to whom I addressed myself spoke the purest French, and recommended me to go to the Hôtel York. It was then the best in the town.

"I ordered a room for one, and supper for four.

"'You are doubtless expecting three friends, Monsieur,' said the waiter.

"'Never mind, order the supper,' I answered, and the man left me for the purpose of doing so.

"I then slipped my hand into my pocket to ascertain how large an amount I could afford to spend on my meal, for I felt I might never be able to eat enough to satisfy my hunger. Ah! gentlemen, a cold perspiration burst from every pore of my skin as I drew my hand out again. I fancied I should faint.

"There was a hole in my pocket!

"It was the early part of October, and I had recently received my salary. On the morning of my departure from Marseilles I had slipped several five-franc pieces into my pocket, and it was their weight and friction which had worked the hole. They were now strewn, like all my ammunition, along the road from Hyères to Nice. I searched every pocket, gentlemen, but I could not find a copper! I had not even enough money to pay my passage across the Styx.

"Thoughts of the supper for four which I had just ordered

suddenly flashed upon me. I could feel my hair rise on end. I rushed at the bell-rope and tugged at it. The waiter, who must have thought somebody was murdering me, hastened in.

"'Waiter!' said I, 'waiter! have you ordered the supper?'

"'Yes, Monsieur.'

"'Then stop it—stop it at once!'

"'But your friends, Monsieur?'

"'They have just called to me through the window that they are not hungry.'

"'But that won't prevent *you* from supping, Monsieur, will it?'

"'Can't you understand,' I retorted impatiently, 'that if my friends have no appetite, I have none either?'

"'No doubt you dined very late, Monsieur,' said the man.

"'Very late.'

"'And you require nothing?'

"'I require to be left alone?'

"My brief replies were ejaculated in a tone which alarmed the waiter. He hurried away, and I heard him saying to a companion, who asked him who I was, 'I don't know, but he must be some English Milord, for he is terribly arrogant.'

"A Lord, indeed! You know what I am, gentlemen, and you will agree with me that this waiter cannot have been a physiognomist.

"My position was by no means pleasant. My garments were in shreds and no longer of any value. I had only my gun left; but what price could I hope to get for my gun? In all probability only a small one. True, I had a diamond ring, but it had been given me by a person whom I had deeply loved, and I would rather have starved to death than part with it. At last I remembered the proverb: 'He who sleeps dines'; and presuming that it would apply to supper as well as to the earlier meal, I plunged between the bedclothes. Incredible as it may seem,

gentlemen, I was so desperately tired that in spite of my hunger and anxiety I fell asleep.

"But I awoke with a canine appetite. That expression, as you know, is used not only in reference to animals, but also in reference to the human species when hunger reaches its most violent stage.

"I sat up in bed to decide what I should do, and I was twiddling my thumbs with increasing nervousness when, all at once, in a corner of my room I perceived a violoncello. I raised a cry of joy!

"You may ask, gentlemen, what there is in common between a 'cello and a man who has neither dined nor supped, except it be that a void exists in both. Well, in my case there was this: that instrument was like a friendly face met in a foreign clime. It was indeed a friend, gentlemen; for when a man has hugged a 'cello night after night for ten long years, a bond exists between them. And for my part I have often noticed that nothing brightens my ideas so much as the music of a 'cello—'Are you a musician, Monsieur Dumas?'"

"Alas! no, Monsieur," I answered.

"But you are fond of music?"

"Generally speaking, nothing annoys me more."

"But if you hear a nightingale singing?"

"Oh! I cry to it as loudly as I can, 'Stop that noise, you horrid creature!'"

At this Méry shrugged his shoulders as a sign of profound contempt, and gave me a withering glance.

"It is a case of defective organism," exclaimed Monsieur Louet, in a conciliatory spirit, for he was afraid that the general good feeling of our party might be disturbed. "The gentleman is more to be pitied than blamed. He is deficient in the fifth sense. I pity you, Monsieur."

"Well, Monsieur Louet," said Méry, "I'm sure that as soon as you had the 'cello between your legs ideas came to you by scores, by thousands. You had too many, eh?"

"No, Monsieur, no, instead of ideas it was the hotel-servants who hastened to my room. While I was playing I imparted some expression of my feelings to the instrument. I drew heartrending gasps from its depths—all my yearnings for my native spot, all the anguish of the void within me also. It was expressive music of the highest order; and as you, gentlemen, must be aware, the natives of the country where I found myself are not like Monsieur Dumas. They are passionately fond of music. Thus I heard people trooping in the passage outside my room. From time to time a murmur of approval reached my ears. There was even clapping. At length the door opened and the hotel-keeper entered. After a last stroke of the bow—a stroke of genius, you understand—I turned towards him. With a 'cello in my grasp, I was conscious of my superiority over this man.

"'I beg Monsieur's pardon for thus intruding on him,' said the landlord, 'but Monsieur himself has caused it.'

"'Well, you are master here,' I replied. 'You are in your own house.'

"I must here observe that I was clad for the moment much after the fashion of Orpheus, that is in a mere tunic, otherwise my shirt.

"'Monsieur appears to be a distinguished instrumentalist,' the landlord continued.

"'I have refused the post of first bass player at the Paris opera-house,' I answered. That was not scrupulously accurate, I must admit, but I was on foreign soil, remember, and it was my duty to uphold the dignity of France.

"'Yet that was a good appointment, Monsieur,' said the hotel-keeper.

"'Ten thousand francs a year and my board: Cutlets and Bordeaux claret for breakfast every morning.' The mention of those two items of sustenance came to my lips instinctively. 'And I declined all that,' I added, 'for the

love of art, for the sake of visiting Italy, the land of the sublime Paesiello and the divine Cimarosa.'

"I was flattering the man.

"'And does not Monsieur intend to make a stay in our town?' he inquired.

"'Why should I?'

"'Why, to give a musical entertainment.'

"That remark, gentlemen, was like a ray of celestial light.

"'An entertainment!' I retorted disdainfully. 'Do you think a town like Nice would remunerate me sufficiently?'

"'Why, Monsieur, at this very moment, we are full of consumptive English people, who have come to spend the winter at Nice. I myself have fifteen of them here at the Hôtel York.'

"'Well, it is the best hotel in Nice,' I answered, still flattering the man. 'They say above all that its table is excellent.'

"'I hope that Monsieur will judge of that himself before leaving,' said he.

"'I can hardly promise as yet——'

"'It is not for me to advise Monsieur, but I am convinced that if he would only give us a *soirée* his time would not be wasted.'

"'And what do you think,' I inquired in an off-hand manner, 'would be the remuneration of such a *soirée?*'

"'If Monsieur would allow me to make the announcements and distribute the tickets I would guarantee him a hundred crowns.'

"'A hundred crowns!' I exclaimed.

"'Oh! I am aware that is not much, Monsieur, but Nice is neither Paris nor Rome.'

"'It is a charming town!' I said, still flattering the man, —'and taking its merits into consideration, well, yes; and if I could be sure that I should be put to no trouble

with respect to details, but merely have to take my 'cello and charm the audience, receiving in return a hundred crowns——'

"'I again guarantee you that amount, Monsieur.'

"'And my board also, as at the Paris opera-house?'

"'And your board also.'

"'Very well then, you may announce me—bill me.'

"'Your name, if you please.'

"'Monsieur Louet, who has arrived at Nice from Marseilles, in pursuit of a *chastre*.'

"'Is it quite necessary to insert that in the bill?'

"'Absolutely necessary, Monsieur, for I am in shooting costume, and without such an explanation the respectable people of Nice might think me disrespectful, though I give you my word of honour that disrespect is quite foreign to my nature.'

"'As you wish, Monsieur. And pray what will you play?'

"'Announce nothing, Monsieur. Send for all the scores at the theatre. I know every one of them, and will play eight compositions of the highest order as the audience may select. That will flatter the English, for as you are aware those islanders pride themselves on their good taste.'

"'Then it is agreed, Monsieur,' the hotel-keeper resumed. 'I will guarantee you a hundred crowns and board you. Your breakfast shall be brought up at once.'

"'Remember, Monsieur,' said I, 'that by this earnest I shall judge how you are in the habit of keeping your engagements.'

"'Be easy,' he rejoined, and as he withdrew, I heard him call to his subordinates: 'A first-class breakfast for Number 4! Sharp!'

"Gentlemen, I looked at the number on my door, it was 4, none other. I could scarcely contain myself for joy. Taking the 'cello in my arms I danced a saraband. Just as I was reconducting my partner to her place, the waiters

came in with the breakfast. It was really a first-class one; and if you should go to Nice, gentlemen, take my advice, stay at the Hôtel York! Should the same man keep it now, which is quite possible, for when I knew him he was of much the same age as myself, I shall be glad to hear your opinion of him.

"I must confess that I sat down to breakfast with a feeling of intense satisfaction. For exactly eight-and-twenty hours I had not tasted food. I was drinking a cup of coffee, when the hotel-keeper returned.

"'Are you satisfied, Monsieur?' he inquired.

"'Delighted!'

"'Well, I have done everything that depends on me, There can be no drawing back now. The bills announcing you are already out.'

"'I will honour them, never fear! But can you tell me how I can get back to Marseilles? I should like to return there to-morrow.'

"'Well, there is a fine brig in the harbour, which will sail for Toulon to-morrow. The captain is a friend of mine, a genuine old sea-dog.'

"'Indeed! I am not acquainted with Toulon, and should rather like to visit it.'

"'Then profit by this opportunity!'

"'But the fact is I don't like the sea'—That is true, gentlemen, in that respect I resemble Monsieur Méry.

"'Oh! just now the sea is as smooth as glass,' said the hotel-keeper.

"'And how long does the passage take?' I asked.

"'Six hours at the utmost.'

"'Oh! that's a mere bagatelle. I will sail in the brig.'

"The concert took place at the appointed time. Modesty will not allow me to say more about it. I received the hundred crowns in full; and the next day, having generously distributed a fantasia on the 'cello among the waiters, by

way of gratuity, I embarked on the good brig, 'Our Lady of Pain,' Captain Garnier, commander.

* * * * * *

"What I had foreseen, gentlemen, took place," resumed Monsieur Louet, "I had scarcely set foot on deck when I felt that it would soon be all up with me if I did not immediately retire to my cabin.

"At the expiration of a couple of hours, just as I was feeling a little better, I heard a great commotion on the deck above. Then a drum beat, and I thought it might be a signal for breakfast.

"'My friend,' I said to a sailor whom I saw carrying an armful of cutlasses, 'what does that drum mean?'

"'It means that the English are coming, my good fellow,' replied the seaman with the frank familiarity which characterises his profession.

"'The English! The English!' said I. 'Oh! they are a good sort, I am indebted to them for three-fourths of the money I took last night.'

"'Well, they may take it all back this morning,' replied the man. And with these words he walked towards the companion.

"Behind him came another carrying an armful of pikes; then another with a bundle of hatchets. At the sight of them I began to suspect that something strange was occurring.

"The noise increased, in such wise that my apprehensions were by no means quieted; but I suddenly heard somebody call down the hatchway: 'Antony! bring me my pipe!'

"'Yes, captain!' was the answer.

"A moment afterwards I saw a cabin-boy carrying the captain's pipe. I caught him by the collar, for his tender years warranted that familiarity on my part, and I said to him: 'Tell me, my young friend, what is that rumpus? Are they having breakfast up above?'

"'Ay, a queer sort of breakfast,' he replied. 'What

with feasting on lead and steel, some of them are likely to be troubled with indigestion. But I must be off. The captain is waiting for his pipe.'

"'Oh, if he wants his pipe, there can't be much danger,' said I.

"'On the contrary, he only asks for it when things are getting warm.'

"'What is warming then?'

"'Why a stew big enough for everybody. Go on deck and you'll see for yourself.'

"I understood that my best course was to follow the lad's judicious advice. But this was not easily accomplished on account of the manner in which the vessel rolled. However, by clinging to bulkheads, I managed to reach the companion, and on grasping the rail tight I felt comparatively at ease. Popping my head through the hatchway with all due precaution, I perceived the captain seated on a chest, four steps away. He was quietly smoking.

"'Good-morning, Captain,' I said with the most amiable smile I could contrive. 'It appears that there is something fresh on board.'

"'Oh! is that you, Monsieur Louet?' he responded. The worthy man knew that my name was Louet.

"'Yes, it is I and none other,' I answered. 'I have been rather ill, as you may perceive, but I feel better now.'

"'Well, Monsieur Louet, have you ever seen a naval action?' asked the captain.

"'Never, Monsieur!'

"'Would you like to see one?'

"'Well, Monsieur, I must confess that I should prefer to see something else.'

"'I am sorry to hear that, because if you wished to see one—a first-class one—you might be humoured almost immediately.

"'Eh!' I exclaimed, turning pale in spite of myself. It is known, gentlemen, that pallor comes over one quite

independently of one's will. 'Eh! You surely don't mean to say that we are about to witness a naval action! You must be joking, Captain! I see, you are a jester!'

"'Oh! it is a joke, is it? Well, climb another couple of steps and look round you. There! Can you see now?'

"'Yes, Captain.'

"'And pray what do you see?'

"'I see three fine vessels yonder.'

"'Count again!'

"'I see four.'

"'Have another try!'

"'Five! Six!'

"'Indeed!'

"'Yes, there are really six.'

"'Do you know anything about flags?'

"'Very little.'

"'Never mind, look at the flag which the largest ship is flying from her gaff, just as we fly our tricolour. What can you see on that flag?'

"'I know very little about heraldry, but it seems to me that I can distinguish a harp——'

"'Well, that is the harp of Ireland. In another five minutes we shall have a tune from it.'

"'But, Captain,' I exclaimed, 'Captain, they are still a long way off, and it seems to me that if you were to spread all that canvas which is now hanging idle, you might easily give them the slip. I know I should make a bolt of it if I were in your place. You will excuse me—won't you?—but that is my opinion as fourth-bass of the theatre of Marseilles; and I should be glad if your views were the same. Of course, if I were a sailor, my opinion might be different——'

"'If a man, instead of a bass, had spoken to me as you have just spoken,' replied the captain, 'there would be trouble between us. Please understand that Captain Garnier never runs away. He fights till his ship is crippled.

Then he awaits the boarders, and when the English swarm over his deck, he goes down to the gun-room with his pipe, puts it to a keg of powder, and sends the English to kingdom come!'

"'But the French?'

"'Oh! the French also.'

"'And the passengers?'

"'The passengers as well.'

"'Come, Captain, don't joke like that!'

"'I never joke, Monsieur Louet, when once "clear for action!" has sounded.'

"'But, Captain, Captain, by all the Rights of Man, it is your duty to set me on shore at once! Besides, I prefer to go home on foot. That's how I travelled to Nice, and I'll find my way to Marseilles in the same fashion.'

"'Shall I give you some advice, Monsieur Louet?' asked the captain, laying his pipe beside him.

"'Give it by all means,' I answered. 'Advice is always welcomed by a sensible man.'

"I was pleased, you see, to give him a little lesson in an indirect manner.

"'Well, Monsieur Louet,' he resumed, 'my advice to you is to go to bed. You have just come from your cabin, have you not? Then go back to it.'

"'But one last question, Captain——'

"'What is it?'

"'Have we no chance of safety at all? I ask you this as a married man, with wife and family.'

"I said that, in the hope of arousing him to some compassion. As a matter of fact I was a bachelor.

"The captain seemed to soften, and I congratulated myself on my ruse. 'Listen, Monsieur Louet,' said he, 'I can understand that the position is unpleasant for a man who does not belong to my calling. Yes, there is a chance.'

"'What is it, Captain?' I cried. 'What is it? If I

can be of the slightest use to you, I am entirely at your service?'

"'Do you see that black cloud yonder, on the south-west?'

"'I see it as plainly as I see you, Monsieur.'

"'It seems to promise nothing more than a little squall. But just go below and pray for it to turn into a tempest.'

"'A tempest, Captain! But we might be wrecked if there should be a tempest!'

"'Well that is the best thing that can happen to us,' said Captain Garnier.

"Then he took up his pipe again; but I noticed with satisfaction that it had gone out.

"'Antony!' he cried, 'Antony! Where have you got to, you wretched sprat!'

"'Here I am, Captain!' replied the cabin-boy, popping his head through the hatchway.

"'Go and light my pipe again, for unless I'm much mistaken the ball is about to begin.'

"At this moment a little white cloud appeared on the starboard side of the English vessel which was nearest to us, and was followed by a deep boom, such as comes from a big drum at a theatre. I saw a portion of the brig's bulwarks fly into splinters; and a gunner, who had climbed up to have a better look, fell against my shoulder.

"'Here! be careful, my friend!' I said to him. 'You may think it amusing to lark like that, but it isn't.'

"As he would not move, I gave him a push, and he fell upon the deck. Then, on looking at him more attentively, I perceived that the unhappy man had no head.

"The sight produced such a terrible effect on my nerves, gentlemen, that five minutes later I was down in the brig's hold. How long I remained there I cannot say. But I heard such a blaring of brass instruments as, despite all my experience of orchestras, I had never heard before. And, after that pandemonium, there came such deep bass music

that I really began to think the overture to the end of the world was being played. I was not at ease, gentlemen, no, I was not, I must admit it.

"At last, after losing all count of time, I found that things were becoming quieter. Nevertheless, I remained motionless in my shelter place for fully another hour. Then, as all the bustle had quite ceased, I went above again, and found myself between decks. Everything was quiet there, except for the moans of a few wounded men. So I mustered courage and ascended to the quarter-deck. Gentlemen, you will hardly believe it, but we were in port!

"'Well,' said Captain Garnier, slapping me on the shoulder, 'here we are, Monsieur Louet!'

"'Yes, indeed,' I replied, 'we seem to be in safety now.'

"Thanks to the storm which I foresaw. The English had so much to do to provide for their own safety that they had no time to attend to us. In such wise that we literally passed between their legs.'

"'As between those of the Colossus of Rhodes,' said I. You know, gentlemen, that according to the historians ships were once enabled to pass between the legs of that colossus.

"'And,' I added to the captain, 'that is probably the Isle of Ste. Marguerite yonder?'

"'What?'

"'I say'—and as I spoke I pointed to an island on the horizon—'I say that is probably the Isle of Ste. Marguerite, where the Man with the Iron Mask was imprisoned for a time.'

"'That!' exclaimed the captain.

"'Yes, that!'

"'Why, it's the island of Elba.'

"'Elba!' I cried. 'In that case my knowledge of geography must be very defective, for I did not imagine that the island of Elba was so near to Toulon.'

"'Where do you see Toulon?'

"'Why, this town is Toulon, is it not? Isn't this port that of Toulon? When we started, Captain, didn't you tell me that we were bound for Toulon?'

"'My dear Monsieur Louet, you know the proverb: Man proposes——'

"'And God disposes,' I rejoined. 'Yes, Monsieur, I know that proverb, it is a very philosophical one.'

"'And a very truthful one,' said the captain, 'for Providence has disposed of us.'

"'But where are we?' I cried.

"'At Piombino.'

"'Piombino!' I exclaimed. 'Why, how dreadful! If this kind of thing continues I shall return to Marseilles by way of the Sandwich Islands, where Captain Cook was killed.'

"'Well, you are certainly not on the way to Marseilles now.'

"'Indeed, I am a long way off.'

"'But what about me then? I come from Brittany.'

"'And how are we to get back?'

"'To Brittany?'

"'No, to Marseilles.'

"'Well, my dear Monsieur Louet, you can sail back in my ship.'

"'Thank you, but I have had enough of it.'

"'In that case you may travel by land, by the coach.'

"'Yes, I much prefer to travel by land.'

"'Well, then, my dear Monsieur Louet, I will have you put on shore.'

"'You will oblige me by doing so, Monsieur,' I replied.

"Captain Garnier immediately hailed a boat. As you are aware, I was not burdened with luggage, I had only my gun and my game-bag to carry. I took leave of the captain, wishing him a safe return, and then prepared to descend the ladder.

"But at that moment he called me again, so I retraced

my steps again. 'What is your pleasure, Monsieur?' I asked.

"He seemed embarrassed. 'You know, my dear Monsieur Louet,' he began, 'that compatriots ought not to stand on ceremony with one another.'

"'I am aware of that, Monsieur.'

"'Then you understand?'

"'Yes, Monsieur, I understand,' I replied, 'though I don't quite know what you are driving at. You mean——'

"'I mean——' repeated the captain.

"'You mean——' said I once more.

"'Well, hang it! I mean that if you are in want of money my purse is at your service. There, it's said now.'

"Gentlemen, the manner in which he made me that offer brought tears to my eyes.

"'Thank you, Captain,' I said, offering him my hand, 'but I am well off.'

"'Oh! as a rule—musicians——'

"'I have a hundred crowns in this handkerchief, Captain.'

"'A hundred crowns! Oh! in that case you have enough to carry you to the end of the world!'

"'I don't wish to go so far, Captain; I shall be quite content to remain at Marseilles, when once I get there.'

"'Then I wish you a pleasant journey,' said he. 'Don't forget me in your prayers.'

"'If I live a hundred years, Captain, I shall never forget you,' I answered.

"'Good-bye, Monsieur Louet.'

"'Good-bye, Captain Garnier.'

"I took my seat in the boat, and the captain crossed the brig's deck to watch me. 'Go to the "French Hussar," "L'Ussero Francese,"' he called. 'That is the best hotel.'

"Those were the last words he spoke to me, gentlemen. I can see him now, poor man, leaning against the bulwarks, and smoking a cigar, for he reserved his pipe for great occasions. Ah! poor captain!"

Monsieur Louet paused to wipe away a tear.

"What happened to him then?" I asked.

"What happened to him, Monsieur? Well, three months later he was cut in halves by a shot from an English thirty-six pounder."

We naturally respected Monsieur Louet's grief, and Méry, by way of doing all he could to calm it, replenished his glass with punch for the third time.

"Gentlemen," said Monsieur Louet, raising his arm to a level with his eye, "I will give you a toast to which none can take objection: 'To the memory of the brave Captain Garnier!'"

We honoured the toast, and Monsieur Louet then resumed his story.

* * * * * *

"I went straight to the hotel of the French Hussar, which I easily found, for it faced the harbour. I at once ordered dinner, being very hungry. Indeed, as you must have observed, gentlemen, for some time now, I had made only one meal every four-and-twenty hours. After dinner I sent for a *vetturino*, a kind of petty jobmaster. It was evident that my manager at Marseilles, not knowing what had become of me, must be feeling very anxious, and I was therefore eager to get back. I found that my absence had already lasted a week, during which, it is true, I had not exactly idled away my time, though, on the other hand, I had certainly not done what I had intended.

"I summoned, in succession, three of those Italian jobmasters without being able to arrive at any understanding with them, for they did not speak my mother-tongue. At last there came a fourth man, who pretended he could speak every language, whereas he could really speak none—that is to say, in a proper manner. Nevertheless, by means of this medley of French, English and Italian we managed to exchange ideas. His suggestion was that I should pay him thirty francs to be taken to Florence, where, he assured

me, I should find a thousand opportunities for returning to Marseilles. As I was very desirous of seeing Florence I agreed to give him the thirty francs. Before he departed, he told me that two of his passengers, one of whom was a Frenchman like myself, had stipulated that the journey should be made by way of Grosseto and Sienna, as they wished to pass through the mountains. I replied that I had no objections to the mountains, but that the sea was another matter. To this he replied that I should be turning my back to the sea throughout the journey, and with that assurance I was satisfied.

"We were to start the same afternoon, and sleep at Scarlino. At two o'clock the coach arrived outside the hotel. Four travellers were already seated in it, and the driver had called for me and my compatriot, who was staying in the same house as myself. I was waiting, in readiness, on the threshold—for as you are aware I had no great preparations to make, having still only the same light luggage, my gun and my game-bag—when I heard the driver call 'Monsieur Ernest.' It quite delighted me to hear a French name.

"Monsieur Ernest came out. He was a handsome officer of Hussars between six- and eight-and-twenty years of age. Leaving the insignia of his rank out of count, he looked exactly like the Hussar on the hotel signboard. He slipped a brace of pistols into the pocket of the coach, then seated himself beside me.

"It did not take me long to observe that Monsieur Ernest had something preying on his mind. I did not know him well enough to ask what it might be, but, at all events, I was desirous of enlivening him by conversation.

"'Monsieur is a Frenchman?' I said to him.

"'Yes, Monsieur,' he replied.

"'Monsieur is perhaps in the army?' I continued.

"But this time he merely shrugged his shoulders, though my question was certainly not indiscreet, for he was in full

uniform. I concluded, however, that he did not desire to converse, and so I remained silent. As for the other travellers, they spoke Italian. As I have already told you, gentlemen, I did not then understand that language, so you will not be surprised to hear that I refrained from joining in the conversation.

" In this wise, without exchanging a word, we reached a very bad inn at Scarlino, and spent a horrible night, for the place swarmed with vermin. I was at last falling asleep, about three o'clock in the morning, when the coach-driver entered my room and bade me get up. It seems that in Italy it is the rule for the coaches to start at unreasonable hours.

" Carrying my gun and bag, I was about to take the seat I had occupied the previous day, when the driver stopped me, saying something of which I could make neither head nor tail.

" ' What do you mean? ' I asked him.

" ' He wishes to know if your gun is loaded,' said Monsieur Ernest.

" ' Your servant, Monsieur! ' I replied, turning to the young officer. ' May I inquire if you have slept well? '

" ' Perfectly well,' he answered.

" ' Then you are not hard to please,' said I. ' For my part——'

" But at this moment the other travellers exclaimed in chorus: ' *Andiamo, andiamo*—let us be off, let us be off! ' while the driver continued to address me on the subject of my gun.

" I begged the young officer to act as my interpreter, and thereupon ascertained that the man wished me to unload my gun, for fear, no doubt, of an accident.

" ' Ah! He is right,' I said, ' I will unload it.'

" ' Pray do nothing of the kind,' Monsieur Ernest retorted. ' Leave your gun as it is. If we should be stopped by robbers we should at least be able to defend ourselves with your gun and my pistols.'

" ' Robbers, Monsieur ! ' I exclaimed. ' Can there be any robbers on this road ? '

" ' Why, there are robbers everywhere in Italy,' said he.

" ' Driver ! ' I called, ' driver ! Why did you not warn me that there were robbers on this road ? '

" ' *Avanti ! avanti !* ' the other passengers now began to call.

" ' Come, jump in,' said Monsieur Ernest. ' Our fellow passengers are getting impatient, and we certainly shall not reach Sienna before midnight.'

" ' Wait until I unload my gun,' I answered, as the driver again intimated that I must do so.

" ' No, no ! ' said the officer to me, ' leave it as it is, and jump in.'

" ' Excuse me, Monsieur,' I replied, ' but I share the driver's opinion. If we should by chance meet any robbers, I should not like them to suspect me of evil intentions towards them——'

" ' In other words, you are afraid ? '

" ' I do not conceal it, Monsieur. I am not a soldier like you. I play the 'cello at the theatre of Marseilles—Monsieur Louet, fourth-bass player at your service,' I added with a bow.

" ' Ah ! you are fourth-bass player at the Marseilles Theatre ! Then you must have known a charming *danseuse* who was there three or four years ago.'

" ' I have known many charming *danseuses*, Monsieur.' said I, ' for my seat in the orchestra is an excellent one for making their acquaintance. Is it indiscreet to ask the name of the one to whom you refer ? '

" ' Mademoiselle Zéphirine.'

" ' Ah, yes, Monsieur, I knew her well. She quitted our city for Italy. She was an extremely light young woman——'

" ' Eh ! ' exclaimed Monsieur Ernest.

" ' I apply the term physically, only physically,' said I, ' and in the case of a dancer it is a term of praise '—here I

assumed my most amiable expression—'or else I know nothing about it.'

"'That is true!'

"At this moment the other passengers again called from the coach; I gathered that they wished to know whether we were likely to start that day or not.

"'One moment, gentlemen,' I said to them. 'I am just going a short distance to discharge my gun, for fear lest the horses should be frightened by the double report.'

"But the driver took the weapon from my hands, explaining that he would deposit it in the hood.

"'Dear me!' I said, 'I never thought of that. Here it is, my good man. Take care of it, it is an excellent weapon.'

"'Now, will you get in?' said Monsieur Ernest again.

"'Here I am, Monsieur, here I am!'

"I got into the coach, the driver shut the door, climbed into his hood, and we started.

"'You were saying,' I resumed turning to Monsieur Ernest in delight at having discovered a subject of conversation which seemed to interest him, 'You were saying that Mademoiselle Zéphirine——'

"'You are mistaken,' Monsieur Ernest interrupted, 'I was saying nothing at all.'

"By this I perceived that his desire for a chat was over, and I became silent.

"Seldom, gentlemen, have I made a more tiresome journey than that, or one over worse roads. Our driver seemed resolved to avoid all towns and villages. You might have thought we were travelling through uncivilized country. We halted to dine at a wretched hut, where we ate an omelet made of eggs which were nearly hatched, and where our driver entered into conversation with several evil-looking fellows, a circumstance which gave me some suspicions. I wished to impart them to my travelling companions, but I could not speak Italian; and, as for

Monsieur Ernest, the manner in which he had received my previous advances did not encourage me to address him again.

"We resumed our journey, gentlemen, but the road, instead of improving, became even viler. It would be no exaggeration to say that we travelled through desert-like solitudes. Eventually we reached a kind of pass, with mountains upon one side and the torrent on the other. To make us feel more uncomfortable, night was now fast approaching. None of us spoke, not even the Italians, and we only heard the driver swearing occasionally at his horses. At last I asked if we were still very far from Sienna, and learnt that we were about half-way.

"It then occurred to me that if I could only sleep the journey would appear very much shorter. I therefore made myself as comfortable as I could in my corner, and closed my eyes as an inducement to slumber. I even tried to snore, but found that the effort of doing so kept me awake, and therefore abandoned that method as inefficacious.

"It is said, however, 'where there's a will there's a way,' and the truth of that axiom was exemplified in my case. After an hour's strenuous effort I fell into that semi-somnolent state in which a man retains some perception of his surroundings, though the command of his faculties is gone. How long I remained in that state I cannot say; but, all at once, it seemed to me that the coach had stopped.

"A great deal of bustle followed. I tried to wake up, but could not do so. In fact, I had mesmerized myself. All at once, however, I heard two pistol shots, and the flashes almost scorched my face. That was more than I could bear, so I opened my eyes. And then what did I see, pointed at my breast, gentlemen? My own gun! Ah! how I repented that I had not unloaded it.

"We had been stopped by a band of brigands, who were shouting at the top of their voices: '*Faccia in terra!*' Face to the ground. I sprang out of the coach immediately,

and yet not fast enough to please the scoundrels, for one of them, with the butt end of my own gun, struck me a blow on the nape of the neck—the very blow, gentlemen, with which one kills a rabbit! Luckily for me, my brain was uninjured, though I fell to the ground, hurting my nose as I did so. And I saw that all my travelling companions were prostrate like myself, that is with the exception of Monsieur Ernest, who was struggling like a demon. But even he, at last, was obliged to surrender.

"Gentlemen, those brigands searched all my garments, even my flannel undervest—excuse my mentioning it, but I wear flannel, because it is so good for the health. Every one of my hundred crowns was taken from me! When, in the hope of saving my diamond ring, I turned the stone round, I realised that it unfortunately lacked the power of the ring of Gyges. This, you will remember, rendered the wearer invisible as soon as the stone of his ring was turned. But the brigands still saw me and my ring also. They took it from me without ceremony.

"They spent nearly an hour searching and researching us in this horrid manner; and afterwards a man, who appeared to be their leader, suddenly inquired: 'Is anyone of these gentlemen a musician?'

"The question seemed to me a very strange one, and I did not think it by any means an appropriate moment to declare my profession. But the man repeated: 'Well, cannot you hear me? I ask if any of you gentlemen can play any musical instrument.'

"'Why, of course,' came the reply in a voice which I recognised as that of Monsieur Ernest, 'there is Monsieur Louet who plays the 'cello.'

"At that moment I wished I had been a hundred feet underground, and I remained as still as if I were quite dead.

"'Which of you is Monsieur Louet?' asked the brigand leader. 'Is it you?'

"I heard steps approaching, and felt a hand on the collar of my shooting-jacket. In a trice I was pulled up, and set upon my feet.

"'In heaven's name, what do you want of me, what do you want of me?' I gasped.

"'Why,' replied the bandit leader (I forgot to mention that he spoke French), 'why, only something which you ought to take as a very great compliment. For a week past we have been seeking a musician without finding one, and the captain has quite lost his temper over it. But he will be pleased now!'

"'What! is it in order to take me to your captain that you wish to know if I play any instrument?' I stammered.

"'Of course it is.'

"'And are you going to separate me from my companions?'

"'Why, what could we do with *them?* They are not musicians,' said the man.

"'Gentlemen!' I cried imploringly, 'help me! help! Surely you will not suffer me to be carried off like this!'

"'Those gentlemen,' replied the head brigand, 'will be kind enough to remain as they are, without stirring, for another quarter of an hour. They may then resume their journey. As for the young officer'—and here the man turned to four of his subordinates, who were holding Monsieur Ernest—'bind him to a tree. In a quarter of an hour the driver may set him at liberty. You hear, driver! If you release him before a quarter of an hour has elapsed, you will have to deal with me, the Picard!'

"The driver gave a kind of groan, which might have been taken as implying that he would obey the injunction. For my part, my strength seemed to have evaporated. A mere child might have mastered me. Thus all was easy for the two stout fellows who held me by the collar.

"'Well, let us be off!' the brigand leader resumed.

'Treat the musician with every consideration. If he resists, you need only push him—you know how.'

"I was curious to ascertain in what manner they would push me if I offered resistance, and so, in spite of my weakness, I did resist. Gentlemen, I then received such a kick that everything danced before me! My curiosity was quite satisfied.

"The brigands took the road to the mountains whose crests rose darkly against the sky. After walking some five hundred paces we crossed a torrent, then entered and threaded a forest of pine trees. On emerging from it we perceived a light.

"We went towards this light, which shone from the window of a small inn, facing a cross-road. At some fifty paces from the inn we halted, one man going forward, alone, to reconnoitre. A signal he made, by clapping his hands three times, doubtless indicated to the Picard that we might approach, for our march was at once resumed, and the bandits began to sing, which they had not done since quitting the highway.

"When I set foot on the threshold of that inn, gentlemen, I heard such an uproar that I thought Satan was keeping festival there.

"'*Ove sta, il Capitano?*' asked the Picard on entering, and I understood that he wished to know where the captain was.

"'*Al primo piano*,' the innkeeper answered.

"'What!' thought I, 'there is a first piano, and the captain's playing it. This man has a passion for music then.'

"But I was mistaken. I did not then know that *primo piano* simply meant the first-floor of the house. All the brigands, excepting two, went upstairs. These two remained to guard me, after requesting me to take a seat in the chimney-corner. One of them had appropriated my gun, the other my game-bag. As for my hundred crowns and my ring, they had become quite invisible.

"A few moments later there was a call from upstairs. I did not understand what was said, but, as the men again took me by the collar and pushed me towards the stairs, I concluded that I was wanted on the first floor.

"I was not mistaken, gentlemen. On entering, I saw the captain seated at a well-served table, with numerous bottles of diverse shapes before him, and a very pretty girl at his side. The captain was from five-and-thirty to forty years of age; he was what one might call a really fine-looking man; and he was clad exactly like a stage brigand, in blue velvet, with a red sash and silver buckles, in such wise that I merely thought myself at a rehearsal and was not at all intimidated, as the man, perhaps, imagined I should be.

"As for the young person in his company, she was dressed like one of the Roman peasant girls in Robert's picture, which I have since seen, that is, in a bodice worked with gold, a short motley skirt and red stockings. Her feet are not worth mentioning, for she seemed scarcely to have any. But such was my presence of mind that I immediately noticed my ring on one of her fingers, a circumstance which, added to the company she was keeping, gave me a very sad opinion of her.

"On reaching the threshold of the room my custodians relaxed their grip, but remained waiting at the head of the stairs. I took a few steps forward, and after bowing first to the lady, then to the captain, and finally to all the assembled company, I waited.

"'Here is the musician you asked for,' said the Picard.

"Then, once more, I bowed."

* * * * * *

"'To what country do you belong?' the captain inquired in French but with a strong Italian accent.

"'I am a Frenchman, your Excellency?'

"'Ah! I am very glad to hear it,' said the young woman in the purest Parisian. "For my part I was delighted to find that everybody spoke French, more or less.

" ' And you are a musician? ' the captain resumed.

" ' I am fourth-bass player at the theatre of Marseilles.'

" ' Indeed! ' the girl exclaimed.

" ' Picard! let this gentleman's instrument be brought to him,' the captain commanded; and turning to the girl he added: ' I now hope, my little Rina, that you won't make any further difficulty about dancing? '

" ' I have made none,' Rina answered, ' but you ought to have known that I could not dance without music.'

" ' Mademoiselle is quite right, your Excellency,' said I, ' she certainly could not dance without music.'

" At this moment, however, one of the brigands appeared at the door, and as much by his gestures as by his words, I understood him to say that no instrument of any kind had been found on me.

" ' What! no instrument! ' roared the captain.

" ' No, Captain,' said the Picard, ' I swear to you I did not see the slightest sign of any 'cello or anything else.'

" ' *Bestia!* ' the captain shouted.

" ' Captain,' said I, ' you must not scold that good fellow. These gentlemen searched my person thoroughly, even my flannel undervest, and so, if my 'cello had been concealed about me, they would have found it. But I did not have it with me.'

" ' You did not have it.'

" ' No, but I beg your Excellency to believe that if I had known your partiality for that instrument I would have brought it—indeed I would have brought two rather than one.'

" ' Very well,' said the captain. ' Let five men start at once for Sienna, Volterra, Grosseto or any other place they please. But in any case there must be a 'cello here to-morrow evening,—and when it arrives you will dance, will you not, my little Rina? '

" ' If I am in the humour, and you are amiable,' said the young woman.

"'You little rogue,' the captain retorted, 'you know you do as you like with me.' And thereupon he offered to kiss her.

"'What, before company!' exclaimed Rina. 'Those are pretty manners!'

"This public rebuke gave me a better opinion of the young person. Besides, curiously enough, the more I looked at her the less did she seem to be a stranger to me. And yet, however much I might cudgel my memory, I could not remember having ever been in such bad company before.

"At last, turning to the captain, the girl exclaimed, 'Why, you haven't even asked this worthy man if he feels hungry.'

"I was deeply touched by this solicitude.

"'Well,' said the captain, 'are you hungry?'

"'Upon my word, Captain,' I replied, 'as you are kind enough to inquire, I will frankly own that I dined very poorly at Scarlino, and that a snack would be extremely welcome.'

"'Take a seat at the table, then,' said he.

"'Captain?'

"'Yes, take a seat,' said Rina with a charming smile. 'You must not stand on ceremony with Tonino, who is a friend, or with me, for I am a compatriot of yours.'

"'Ah!' said I, 'the Captain's name is Tonino! That is very pretty and musical.'

"'His real name is Antonio,' the girl answered with a laugh. 'Tonino is a pet name which I have given him,' and looking up into his eyes with an expression which even the captain's patron saint would have been unable to withstand, she added: 'And I call him by it because I am so fond of him.'

"'Enchantress!' murmured the captain.

"Meantime, however, a cover had been set and a chair placed for me with all possible respect. I began to understand that my position with Captain Tonino might prove

more endurable than I had at first imagined, for I should be treated with the consideration due to an artiste. Indeed, Mademoiselle Rina herself now kindly passed me the dishes, and filled my glass with wine, thus enabling me to make quite sure that it was indeed my ring which was sparkling on her finger. From time to time I glanced at her face, and the more I did so, gentlemen, the more positive I felt that I had seen her somewhere previously As for the captain, he amused himself by toying with her hair, thereby earning more than one sharp rap on the knuckles. And he constantly repeated: 'You will dance, won't you, my little Rina?' to which she invariably retorted: 'We will see.'

"When I had supped, Mademoiselle Rina judiciously remarked that I might be in need of repose. This was true, and indeed, though it is impolite to yawn—I do not say that for you, Monsieur Jadin—I was yawning enough to dislocate my jaw. So without waiting to be told twice that I might go to bed, I asked for my room, retired to it, and slept soundly for fifteen consecutive hours.

"The captain was waiting impatiently for me to awake, yet he was polite enough not to disturb me, which seemed very delicate behaviour on the part of a brigand chief. But I had scarcely sneezed—I am in the habit of sneezing as I awake—when some men entered my room carrying on fewer than five violoncellos. Each messenger had brought back one, and I could not help remarking that, as a natural consequence, the value of 'cellos would rise in that neighbourhood. My observation made the captain smile, and when I had selected the best of the five instruments, the other four were broken up for firewood.

"I was requested to repair to the captain's quarters with the 'cello I had chosen, as they were there waiting dinner for me. You will understand that I did not allow them to wait any longer. There was a large table laid for the captain, Mademoiselle Rina, the Picard (who was the

lieutenant of the band) and myself; and seven or eight smaller tables for all the other men. At one end of the room quite three hundred candles were sparkling, providing a delightful illumination, and I guessed that after dinner we should have a ball.

"The repast was very gay, gentlemen, These bandits were really good fellows, and the captain, in particular, was in the best possible humour, owing no doubt to the extreme graciousness of Mademoiselle Rina. Directly the meal was finished, he turned to her, saying, 'You know, my little Rina, what you promised me?'

"'But I have not refused, have I?' she answered with a smile. And here let me mention that she really had a captivating smile.

"'Well then, go and get ready, but don't be long,' said the captain.

"'Place your watch on the table,' she retorted.

"'There it is.'

"'I shall require a quarter of an hour. Is that too much?'

"'No, certainly not,' I boldly answered.

"'Well, a quarter of an hour then,' said the captain.

"Tripping as lightly as any fawn, Mademoiselle Rina quitted the room by the door near which the three hundred candles were disposed.

"'Now I hope you mean to distinguish yourself, Master Musician,' said the captain to me.

"'I will do my best,' I answered.

"'That's right, and if I am satisfied with you, your hundred crowns shall be returned to you.'

"'And my ring, captain?'

"'Oh! as for your ring, you must bid it good-bye. Besides, as you know, Rina has it, and you are, surely, too gallant to wish to deprive her of it.'

"I believe I pulled a somewhat wry face as I nodded assent, but at all events the captain appeared to be satisfied.

" ' As for you, my men,' he resumed, ' I am going to give you a treat fit for the College of Cardinals. I hope you will be pleased with it.'

" ' *Evviva il Capitano !* ' replied the brigands.

" At this moment Mademoiselle Rina appeared on the threshold, and with one bound reached the middle of the room.

" Gentlemen, she was costumed like a *Bayadere*, with a silver bodice, a large Cashmere shawl serving as a sash, gauze skirts which scarcely reached her knees, and silk fleshings. Thus garmented, she looked most charming. I grasped my 'cello, fancying myself at the theatre of Marseilles again.

" ' To what air would you like to dance, Mademoiselle ? ' I asked her.

" ' Do you know the *pas de châle* in the ballet of *Clari* ? ' she inquired.

" ' Certainly,' said I, ' it is my favourite.'

" ' Begin then, I am ready.'

" I started on the *ritournelle*. The brigands mustered all around.

" At the very first bars, Mademoiselle Rina flew like a sylph. Her capers, her *jetés*, her *pirouettes*, were all splendid. The brigands shouted : ' *Brava ! Bravissima !* ' like madmen ; and for my part it seemed to me that I knew those limbs, that I had seen them dancing somewhere before, gentlemen. I never forget the method of a dancer whom I have once observed.

" She did not seem to grow tired. Indeed the applause must have stimulated her. She was up, she was down, she leaped, she whirled, and all in the most graceful manner ! The captain seemed to lose his senses, and on my side I felt half mad, for it seemed to me that those feet of hers recognized me as much as I recognized them. I almost believed that if they could have spoken they would have exclaimed familiarly, ' How do you do, Monsieur Louet ? '

"But in the middle of the dance the innkeeper entered, looking quite alarmed, and whispered a few words in the captain's ear.

"'*Ove sono?* where are they?' the captain quietly inquired.

"'At San Dalmazio,' the innkeeper replied.

"'Well, we will finish the dance, we have plenty of time.'

"'What is the matter?' now asked Mademoiselle Rina, as she drew herself up with her arms extended.

"'Nothing, nothing,' the captain answered. 'It seems that those rascally travellers, who were stopped yesterday, have given the alarm at Sienna and Florence, and that the Grand Duchess Eliza's Hussars are on our track.'

"'Well, fortunately I have finished my dance,' said Rina with a laugh.

"'Oh! just one more *pirouette*, my little Rina,' the captain entreated.

"'Well, I won't refuse you. The last eight bars again, Monsieur, if you please.—Well?'

"'I am looking for my bow, Mademoiselle,' I stammered. Truth to tell, the bow had dropped from my hand when I heard the news about the Hussars. But those same tidings seemed to have imparted fresh strength to Mademoiselle Rina. I should think that she had never before scored such a triumph. However, a last bound brought her to the door by which she had previously quitted the room in order to dress, and then, after curtseying and kissing her hand to the captain, she withdrew to the slips, as it were.

"'Now to arms!' the captain cried. 'Let a horse be saddled for Rina, and another for the musician. We ourselves will go on foot. And the Romano road, remember! Those who may go astray are to join again at Chianciano, between Chiusa and Pianza.'

"'What, Monsieur!' said I to the captain, 'you mean to take me with you?'

"'Of course! How can Rina dance if there is no music? And how can I do without the sight of her dancing?'

"'But you will expose me to a thousand dangers, Captain?'

"'Neither more nor less than ourselves.'

"'But it is your profession, Captain, and it is not mine.'

"'Well, how much did you earn at your barn of a theatre?'

"That, gentlemen, is how he spoke of the theatre of Marseilles.

"'I was paid eight hundred francs, Captain,' I answered.

"'Well, I'll pay you a thousand crowns. What manager would give you as much?'

"No reply was possible. I had to make the best of my lot.

"'Everything is ready now,' said the Picard, hastily returning.

"'And here am I!' added Rina, running in, attired once more in her peasant costume.

"'Then let us start,' said the captain.

"'The Hussars! The Hussars!' the innkeeper shouted, whereupon we all ran towards the stairs.

"But the captain looked round. 'Thunder and lightning!' he said to me savagely 'you are forgetting your 'cello!'

"I took up the instrument, gentlemen, devoutly wishing that it had been possible for me to hide inside it. On reaching the door we found the horses ready.

"'Well, Monsieur,' said Rina to me, 'won't you assist me to mount. You are not gallant!'

"I offered her my arm in a mechanical way, and as I did so I felt that she slipped a scrap of paper into my hand. A cold perspiration at once gathered on my forehead. What could she have written on that paper? Was it a declaration? Had my personal appearance fascinated her? Had I become the captain's rival? For a moment I felt inclined

to throw the paper away, but curiosity prevailed, and I slipped it into my pocket.

"'The Hussars! the Hussars!' called the innkeeper once more.

"Indeed, a clatter like that of galloping horsemen could be heard coming from the high road.

"'Mount, you mummer!' cried the Picard, catching hold of me by the seat of my breeches and half hoisting me into the saddle. 'There, that will do. Now, men, fasten his 'cello on his back.'

"I felt them tying the instrument on me. Then a couple of men took Mademoiselle Rina's horse by the bridle, and two others grasped the bridle of mine. The captain, with a carbine on his shoulder, ran on beside the young woman. The Picard ran beside me. The rest of the band, some eighteen or twenty men, followed behind. But, all at once, five or six shots were fired at us from a distance of some three hundred paces, and we heard the bullets whistling past.

"'To the left!' the captain commanded. 'To the left!'

"Directly this order was given we diverged from the road, plunging into a kind of valley, through which a mountain streamlet coursed. I had never before found myself on horseback, and, in order to retain my seat, I was compelled to grasp the animal's mane with one hand and his tail with the other. It is fortunate, gentlemen, that a horse is so well provided with hair.

"When we were well in the valley, the captain bade us halt. We did so, and listened. The Hussars could be heard galloping furiously along the highway.

"'If they keep up that speed,' said the Picard, 'they will soon reach Grosseto.'

"'Let them go!' the captain answered. 'We will follow the stream. The noise we will make will be covered by the rush of the water.'

"We went on in this fashion for about an hour and a half,

then reached a point where another streamlet joined the one we had been following.

"'Is that not the Orcia?' asked the captain in an undertone.

"'No, no,' the Picard replied. 'That's only the Orbia. The Orcia is at least four miles lower down.'

"We resumed our journey, and an hour later we found a second stream flowing into ours, for our line of march had been along a river bed. So you see, Monsieur Méry, the Var is not the only river which cries out for water.

"'Ah! I know where we are now,' said the captain. 'To the left! To the left!'

"The order was immediately obeyed. At last, about four o'clock in the morning, we reached a highway.

"'Come, keep up your pluck!' the Picard said to me, on hearing my moans, for I felt extremely sore. 'Here is the high road to Sienna. In another hour and a half we shall reach Chianciano.

"As you may suppose, we merely crossed the high road, for frequented spots were not to the liking of the brigands. When we had gone another thousand yards or so, we came to some mountains; and, briefly, as the Picard had prophesied, in another hour and a half, that is about daybreak, we reached Chianciano. The innkeeper there received us as if we were expected by him. It seemed as though we were regular customers of his.

"We had been travelling for twelve hours, and, according to my calculations, we had covered quite twenty leagues of country. When I was lifted from my horse, with the 'cello, I felt as stiff as the instrument itself. So, while the brigands asked for breakfast, I asked for a bed.

"They led me into a little closet whose only window was barred, while the door opened into the room where the men took their meal. There could be no thought of escaping. Besides, even if I had been minded to try, I was physically incapable of any effort.

"As I took off my breeches—breeches were still worn in those days, gentlemen; indeed I adhered to them till 1830—I suddenly remembered the paper which Mademoiselle Rina had handed me, and which I had forgotten during our nocturnal journey. Even if I had remembered it, however, I could not have read it on account of the darkness.

"It was a little note, written in pencil,—and beginning in this fashion: 'My dear Monsieur Louet.' When I saw these words, much as I desired to read the rest, I paused in astonishment. 'Dear me!' I thought, 'so Mademoiselle Rina knows my name.'

"Then I continued reading as follows:

"'As you may suppose, the company in which we find ourselves is no more to my liking than it is to yours, but to give it the slip without mishap, prudence is even more necessary than courage. When the proper time comes I trust that you will be deficient in neither. Besides, I shall set you an example. Meantime pretend you don't know me.

"'I wish I could have returned you your ring, for I have noticed how anxiously you have glanced at it, but I must keep it, for I need it to effect our joint deliverance. For the present, farewell, my dear Monsieur Louet. We shall meet again some day, I hope—you in the orchestra of the theatre of Marseilles and I on the stage there.

"'ZÉPHIRINE.

"'P.S.—Swallow this note.'"

* * * * * *

"The signature explained everything, gentlemen! Mademoiselle Rina was none other than little Zéphirine, who by reason of her prodigious success had been re-engaged three years running at the theatre of Marseilles. You cannot remember her, Monsieur Méry, you are too young. But you see by this how people meet again.

"I read the note a second time and was then particularly struck by the postscript: 'Swallow this note.' It was a

prudent course to take, though by no means a pleasant one. However, I decided to do as Mademoiselle Zéphirine desired, and went to sleep, feeling more at ease now that I knew I had a friend in the company.

"I was slumbering soundly, when all at once somebody shook my right arm. I sneezed—I have already admitted, I think, that I always sneeze when I awake—and as I opened my eyes I saw it was the Picard, the lieutenant of the band, who had ventured to rouse me in this unceremonious manner.

"'Up! up!' he called. 'The Hussars are at Monte Pulciano. We must start in a quarter of an hour.'

"I made but one leap from my bed to my clothes. The horrid bullets of the previous evening were still whistling in my ears.

"The first person whom I saw on quitting my room was Mademoiselle Zéphirine, who seemed as gay as a lark. I admired her strength of mind and resolved to imitate it. As a first step, in order to reassure her, I signed to her with my finger that I had swallowed her note. She doubtless thought that if this were all I had swallowed since our arrival at the inn, I must be in need of additional sustenance, for turning to the captain with a laugh, she said: 'Tonino, our musician is making signs that he is as empty as his instrument. Is there not time for him to eat something before we start?'

"'Pooh! pooh!' replied the captain, 'he can have something at Sorano.'

"'Are we all ready, then?' asked Zéphirine.

"'Wait a moment, I will see,' said Tonino; and, leaving the room, he called to his men: 'Are you ready?'

"While he was thus engaged, Zéphirine ran to the window, drew my ring from her finger, and swiftly scratched something on the glass. When the captain returned he found her standing where he had left her.

"'Come, come,' said he, 'we shall have time to rest

at Sorano.' And he added between his teeth: 'Either we have been betrayed or those devilish Hussars are sorcerers!'

"Then, bidding me go ahead, he gave his arm to Zéphirine, and we went downstairs. The horses were ready as on the previous night. Similar arrangements were made, and we travelled in a similar manner. Only, as we started during the daytime, we reached our destination earlier. All the same, we found there was scarcely anything to eat at the wretched inn to which the captain conducted us, and if Mademoiselle Zéphirine had not generously shared her supper with me I should have gone to bed fasting.

"I had not been lying down more than ten minutes when I heard a most terrible racket. Jumping out of bed, I caught hold of my clothes, opened the door and asked: 'Whatever is the matter?'

"The bandits, armed to the teeth, swarmed round me.

"'The matter is that we are surrounded by those cursed Hussars,' cried the lieutenant. 'There must be some traitor among us. If I thought it were you——'

"But at that moment the innkeeper opened a door conducting to a private staircase, and called, 'This way! This way!'

"The captain at once sprang down the stairs, holding Mademoiselle Zéphirine by the hand. The Picard pushed me next, and the rest of the band followed.

"At the foot of the stairs the innkeeper entered a little wood-house, went to a trap-door in one corner and raised it. Not another word was spoken, but the captain understood everything. He went down, through the trap, by a ladder, at the same time assisting Mademoiselle Zéphirine to descend. We all followed, and heard the innkeeper shutting the door above us and covering it with faggots, while the Picard for his part removed the ladder. Thus, those who might wish to join us in our retreat would have to jump, one by one, a height of about fifteen feet.

"I need hardly tell you that I immediately profited by this respite to dress myself.

"A few moments elapsed, and then we heard a terrific banging at the inn door, as if somebody were trying to beat it in.

"'*I schioppi sono caricati?*' asked the captain.

"As this was much the same question that the coach-driver had asked me respecting my gun, I understood it. Besides I heard a sound of ramrods in such of the brigands' fire-arms as were not yet ready.

"'Gentlemen!' I then exclaimed, 'gentlemen, I certainly hope——'

"'Silence, if you wish to live,' the Picard retorted.

"'Certainly I wish to live——' I answered.

"'Silence, or I'll gag you!'

"As I did not desire to be gagged, I said no more, but sought a corner in which I might find some shelter from the impending bullets. Unfortunately there was no such corner in that horrid cavern, it was a veritable dungeon.

"However, we heard the door of the hostelry open; and by the rapping of heels and gun-stocks overhead, we understood that a party of soldiers had entered the house. As you will perceive, we had been followed very closely. There were twenty of us in that cavern, and yet so deep was the silence there that one might have heard the buzzing of a fly. But up above, matters were very different. It seemed as if the inn were being sacked. The shouts, the imprecations, were enough to make one shudder! Two or three times we heard the soldiers entering the wood-house in which the trap-door was located; and our silence was then broken by the cocking of our guns. It was a very faint sound, gentlemen, but it went straight to my heart.

"At last, at the expiration of three or four hours, the noise slowly abated. Perfect stillness ensued, then we heard the faggots being removed, and the trap-door was opened. Our host had come to tell us that the French-

men, weary of their fruitless search, had departed, and that we might now leave our retreat.

"While the brigands drew near to the trap to converse with the innkeeper, Mademoiselle Zéphirine, who had remained alone with your humble servant, at the far end of the cavern, came close and took my hand, saying: 'We are saved!'

"'How so?' I inquired.

"'Why, Ernest is on our track.'

"'Who is Ernest?'

"'A young officer of Hussars,—my lover.'

"'Oh! indeed. In that case I know Monsieur Ernest.'

"'You know him! A handsome young man of five- or six-and-twenty, about your height, but with a much better figure?'

"'The same! I travelled with him from Piombino to—— But stop! I remember now, he spoke to me of you!'

"'He spoke to you of me! Dear Ernest!'

"'But he must be a perfect sorcerer to follow our track so closely,' said I.

"'No, my dear Monsieur Louet, he is no sorcerer; but at every inn we reach I write my name on a window-pane, together with that of the next village where we intend to stop.'

"'Oh! I understand now! And that is why you require my ring. A thousand apologies, Mademoiselle, for the ridiculous suspicions I had formed! The stone must scratch the glass well, for it is a real diamond——'

"'Hush, they are saying something important!'

"Then, for a moment she remained silent, listening to the brigands, whom I myself did not understand, for they were speaking in Italian.

"'Ah! I have it,' she exclaimed at last, 'Caprarola, Ca-pra-ro-la, remember that name lest I should forget it. It is there we are going——'

"'What!' I exclaimed in alarm, 'we are again going——'

"'Eh?' said the Picard, suddenly turning round.

"'Nothing, lieutenant, nothing,' I replied. 'I was only anxious about my 'cello.'

"Zéphirine quickly left me, slipping among the brigands, in such wise that when the captain looked for her, he found her beside him.

"'Well, my little Rina,' said he, 'those French devils are gone.'

"'I breathe again,' she answered; 'is it known which way they went?'

"'Our host thinks that as they belong to the Grand Duchess's Hussars they have no right to come farther south; but it seems that a young officer who is with them has a commission to keep up the pursuit and call out troops wherever he finds any.'

"'Then what are we going to do?'

"'Resume our journey.'

"'In broad daylight?'

"'Oh! have no fears, we have roads of our own.'

"'But I am really very tired.'

"'Come, show a little courage, Rina. We haven't much farther to go—thirty-five miles at the utmost. By to-morrow night we shall be in safety.'

"'Then let us start.'

"'Forward!' said the captain.

"'But what about my 'cello?' I asked the Picard.

"'Oh! don't be uneasy. It has not been harmed.'

"'Not been harmed! Good!' said I; for as you will understand, gentlemen, that 'cello was my safeguard.

"Well, we resumed our journey. The innkeeper acted as our guide, and did not quit us till we had reached what the captain called one of his own roads. It was truly one of Satan's!

"About noon we entered a large forest, a perfect brigands' forest, and I am sure that we should have met with some unpleasant encounter if we had not been in such good

company. About four o'clock we reached Caprarola, where we at last spent a quiet day and night, undisturbed by Monsieur Ernest, who had hitherto prevented us from either eating or sleeping. For the moment he had either lost our track or else lacked sufficient forces to pursue us. The inn was badly provisioned, but a messenger was sent to the nearest town, Ronciglione, I think, and returned with enough supplies for a fairly good dinner.

"At three in the morning we were awakened, but as I had retired to rest at six in the evening, I had obtained from eight to nine hours' sleep. That is what I require, gentlemen. If I do not get a full eight hours, I feel quite ill.

"This time the journey was a short one. About eleven in the morning we were ferried across a river, then halted to lunch at an inn which was called, I heard, the Osteria Barberina.

"'Ah!' said the captain, 'now we are at home.'

"'What! at home in this wretched inn!' replied Zéphirine, pouting. 'Why, where is the wonderful *castello* you talked to me about?'

"'Oh! I only mean that we are now on our own estates, and that from this point onward you may command as freely as any queen.'

"'Then my commands are that you place this room at my disposal for a few minutes, for I don't wish to show myself to my subjects of —— What is the name of our castle?'

"'Anticoli.'

"'Well, to my subjects of Anticoli in my present travel-stained condition. Why, I should frighten them!'

"'*Civetta!* You coquette!' said the captain, smiling.

"'Go, go! I shall be ready in a quarter of an hour.' And thereupon Zéphirine put us out of the room and locked herself inside it.

"'So you have a castle, Captain?' said I.

"'Something of the kind,' he answered.

" ' Is it your own property? '

" ' Oh, no! In that case I might be troubled by the Government. It belongs to a Roman nobleman who lends it me. I pay him a small rent. The honest man is kept in the city by the duties of his office, and of course he must turn his country-place to some use.'

" ' Then we shall be as happy there as fighting-cocks? '

" ' Precisely! We may have to do a little fighting now and then, but that is one of the pleasures of our profession.'

" ' Oh, I did not mean that! ' I stammered. ' I must remind you, Captain, that I am only in your service as a 'cello-player.'

" ' But what about that gun and game-bag, which you claimed as being your property? '

" ' They were certainly mine—and, by the way, is there any good shooting on the estate you speak of, Captain? '

" ' Splendid shooting! '

" ' What sort of game is there, then? '

" ' All sorts.'

" ' Any *chastres ?* '

" ' *Chastres*, indeed! Yes, flocks of them! '

" ' That's capital, Captain,' said I. ' Then I'll keep the table supplied with game.'

" ' All right. I will lend you three or four of my men to beat the coverts, and you shall have as much shooting as you desire.'

" ' You were also good enough to promise me——'

" ' What? '

" ' My hundred crowns.'

" ' That's true. Picard, see that those hundred crowns are returned to this worthy man.'

" ' Really, Captain,' said I, ' it is strange that anybody should wish you harm. You are the most honest brigand I ever met.'

" At this moment Zéphirine came out of the room. ' Here I am,' said she.

"'What, already!' the captain exclaimed.

"'Oh! I can be quick when I like,' she answered. 'I have had time to do all I desired.'

"'Bravo! In that case we shall set off again.'

"'I am ready,' said Zéphirine, who, while the captain opened the window and called his men together, had time to exchange a glance with me, and point to the ring she wore. I at once understood what she had been doing while she was left alone in the room.

"We started about two o'clock, and at four we reached the bank of another little river. The captain called the ferryman, addressing him by his name, and the fellow hastened to us like one who recognized the voice that had summoned him. He and the captain conversed in whispers while we were crossing.

"'Well,' asked Mademoiselle Zéphirine with a well-feigned assumption of uneasiness, 'is our castle no longer where it was?'

"'Oh, yes,' said the captain, smiling, 'in another quarter of an hour I hope we shall be installed in it.'

"'What a blessing!' exclaimed Zéphirine; 'we have been wandering about quite long enough!'"

* * * * * *

"We passed down a magnificent avenue of poplars, at the end of which was a gate, that of the grounds of a magnificent villa. The captain rang, and the porter opened the gate. As soon as he had recognized the captain he struck the bell in a particular manner, and five or six servants ran up. It seemed as if the captain's presence had been greatly desired, for there was much rejoicing among all these retainers. He, however, merely treated their demonstrations like marks of respect which were due to him, and to which he was well accustomed.

"'That will do! that will do!' said he, 'walk ahead and light the way.'

"The servants obeyed. One of them wished to relieve

me of my 'cello, with the best of intentions, no doubt; but as it was an excellent instrument I would not entrust it to him. The result was a trifling squabble, which the Picard terminated by giving the man a violent blow with his fist. Thus I remained in possession of the 'cello, which I had determined to take back to France with me, should I ever enjoy the happiness of returning thither.

"We were shown to our respective apartments. The place was a perfect palace, gentlemen, one of the country palaces of the Roman nobility, as the captain had said. For my part, I was given a room decorated with magnificent frescoes. It is true that the door opened into the chief gallery, and that I could neither enter nor quit the room without passing five or six servants, who at the very first glance seemed to me to be genuine brigands disguised as lackeys.

"You can imagine, gentlemen, to what a condition I had been reduced by my travels, and I was therefore about to ring and request the loan of a few articles of clothing, when a servant came in with a quantity of linen, shoes, stockings, breeches, dress-coats and morning-coats, from all which he invited me to select whatever might fit me or take my fancy. But I shuddered when I thought that all this apparel must be stolen property; and on that account I contented myself with a riding-coat, a dress-coat, two pairs of breeches, and six shirts. Nobody could have shown greater moderation under such circumstances.

"Before the servant withdrew he opened the doors of a small bath-room, and told me that dinner would be served *alle vingti-due*. After numerous explanations I gathered that this meant we should dine between six and seven o'clock. I have never been able to understand, however, what *vingti-due*, otherwise twenty-two, had to do with that hour.

"As will be perceived I had only just enough time for my toilet. Fortunately, I found everything necessary laid out for me on a table, including even some excellent English

razors, which I have ever since regretted, for I have never found any equal to them in France.

"Just as I had finished dressing, the dinner-bell rang. I gave a final touch to my hair, and quitting my room locked the door, and put the key in my pocket, for fear lest anybody should touch my 'cello in my absence. A servant conducted me to the drawing-room, where a young nobleman, a young lady, and a French officer were already assembled.

"I thereupon thought I must have entered the wrong room, and was about to withdraw, but just as, stepping backward, I trod on the servant's toes, I heard the young lady say: 'Why, what are you about, my dear Monsieur Louet? Don't you intend to dine with us?'

"'I beg your pardon, Mademoiselle,' I answered, 'but I did not recognize you.'

"'If you prefer it, my dear Monsieur Louet,' now said the young nobleman, 'you may have your dinner served in your own room.'

"'Why, Captain, is it you?' I exclaimed. Really, gentlemen, I was lost in astonishment.

"'Oh, Monsieur Louet would not be so unkind as to deprive us of his company,' now remarked the officer, who saluted me with a bow.

"I turned to acknowledge his politeness—gentlemen, it was the lieutenant. There had been as complete a transformation as in Cinderella.

"'*Al suo commodo*,' said a footman as he threw back the folding doors of the dining-room.

"'What may that mean, if it is not indiscreet to ask?' said I to the lieutenant.

"'It means, my dear Monsieur Louet,' he replied, 'that the soup is on the table.'

"The captain gave his hand to Mademoiselle Zéphirine, and the lieutenant and I followed them into the well-lighted dining-room, where the meal was served in admirable style.

"'I don't know whether you will be satisfied with my cook, Monsieur Louet,' said the captain, taking his place and showing me mine, 'but he is French, and so said to be fairly skilful. I have ordered two or three Provençal dishes expressly for you.'

"'What! flavoured with garlic? Fie!' said the lieutenant, opening a gold snuff-box and taking a pinch of perfumed rappee.

"Gentlemen, I thought I was dreaming, particularly when some soup was served me. 'Why, this is a *bouillabaisse!*' said I. And so it was, and an excellent one besides.

"'Have you glanced at the park, Monsieur Louet?' the captain inquired.

"'Yes, your Excellency,' I replied, 'from the window of my room.'

"'It is said to be well stocked with game,' the captain continued, 'you must inspect it to-morrow. You promised to supply us with game, you know.'

"'And I renew my promise, Captain,' I answered. 'Only I must beg you to let me have my own gun. I am accustomed to it, and, somehow, I can never shoot properly with any other.'

"'Agreed!' said the captain.

"'By-the-bye,' Zéphirine now observed, 'you know that we are to dine early to-morrow, Tonino. You promised to take me to the Teatro della Valle. I am anxious to see the third-rate little dancer who has replaced me there.'

"'But there is no performance to-morrow,' the captain answered, 'there will be none till the next day. Besides, I do not know whether the carriage is in good order. But I will see to everything, depend on me. Meantime, would you like to ride to Tivoli or Subiaco to-morrow?'

"'Will you join us, my dear Monsieur Louet?' the young woman inquired.

"'No, thank you,' I replied, 'I am not accustomed to

horses, so it would be no pleasure for me to go riding. Besides, if the captain offers it, I will try my luck in the coverts. I am a sportsman before anything else.'

"'As you please, my dear Monsieur Louet,' the captain replied. 'You are free to do as you like.'

"'I will keep Monsieur Louet company, and shoot with him,' said the lieutenant.

"'I shall feel deeply honoured by your society, Monsieur,' I answered, bowing.

"So it was agreed that the captain and Zéphirine should ride over to Subiaco, while the lieutenant and myself enjoyed some shooting in the park.

"After dinner I was left at liberty to do as I pleased, and as I had been leading a very trying and restless life for the past fortnight or three weeks, I availed myself of this latitude to return to my room. Picture my astonishment when, on opening the door which I had previously locked, I perceived my gun standing in one corner, my game-bag hanging in another, and my hundred crowns lying on the mantel-piece! From this it was evident that Captain Tonino's servants required no keys to unlock the doors of his villa.

"While I was undressing, the cook, to whom I had sent a complimentary message respecting the *bouillabaisse*, came to ask me whether I would like to breakfast the next morning in the Provençal, French or Italian style, for, said he, as I intended to go shooting, the Count of Villaforte had given orders that I should be served in my room. From this speech it appeared that Captain Tonino, besides changing his attire, had also thought fit to change his name. But I said nothing of this to the cook. I merely renewed my compliments, and asked him to let me have a chicken fried in oil, commonly called a *poulet à la Provençale*, that, gentlemen, being my favourite dish.

"I spent a very good night, sleeping so soundly that I did not awake till my breakfast arrived at the door. And I breakfasted, gentlemen, like a king. Just as I was draining

a cup of chocolate, I felt a tap on the shoulder. I turned, and saw the lieutenant in a handsome shooting costume.

" ' Why ! ' said he, ' are you not ready? '

" I made him a thousand apologies, but observed, by way of excuse, that I could hardly go shooting in short breeches, whereupon he pointed to a shooting costume similar to his own, which was lying in readiness on a sofa. I was like Aladdin, gentlemen. I merely had to express a wish in order to see it gratified !

" In a few minutes I was ready, and we went downstairs. Outside the house, I saw some servants holding four saddle-horses, one for the captain, one for Mademoiselle Zéphirine, and two for the grooms who were to accompany them. At the same moment the captain appeared. He slipped a brace of double-barrelled pistols into his holsters, and the grooms who were to accompany him did likewise. He and they, moreover, wore a kind of fancy dress, which allowed them to carry hunting knives.

" The captain saw that I noticed these precautions. ' What else can I do, my dear Monsieur Louet? ' said he. ' There is such a bad police service in this part of the world that you can never be sure of your safety. So, as you will understand, it is as well to be armed.'

" As a matter of fact I did not understand at all. I had either been dreaming or else I was dreaming now. Which was illusion, which reality, Captain Tonino, or the Count of Villaforte? That was a point which I could not possibly determine, so I decided to let things take their course.

" And now Mademoiselle Zéphirine appeared, looking quite charming in her riding habit.

" ' Well, good luck, my dear Monsieur Louet,' said the captain as he leapt into the saddle. ' We shall be back by four o'clock, and I hope your shooting will then be over.'

" ' I hope so, too, Monsieur le Comte,' said I, ' but I no longer dare to express an opinion on such matters. There is no telling whither a shooting excursion may lead one.'

"'At any rate,' continued the captain, while spurring his horse and making it caracole, 'at any rate, Beaumanoir, I leave Monsieur Louet to your care.'

"'Be easy, Count,' the lieutenant answered.

"Then, after waving farewell, the captain and Mademoiselle Zéphirine set off at a canter, followed by the grooms.

"'Excuse me, Monsieur,' said I, approaching the lieutenant, 'it was you, I believe, whom the Count addressed by the name of Beaumanoir?'

"'Quite so.'

"'But I thought the Beaumanoir family was extinct?'

"'Well, I have revived it, that's all.'

"'You are at liberty to do so, Monsieur,' I said. 'Allow me to apologize if I was indiscreet.'

"'Oh! you need make no excuse, my dear Louet. Would you like a dog or not?'

"'I prefer to have none,' I answered. 'The last time I went shooting with one, it insulted me abominably, and I should not like the same thing to occur again.'

"'As you please. Gaetano, release Romeo for me.'

"The shooting began. With my first six shots, gentlemen, I winged four *chastres*, which clearly proved to me that the one I had followed from Marseilles had been bewitched.

"But Monsieur de Beaumanoir laughed when he noticed what I fired at. 'Why, do you find any amusement in shooting such game as that?' he asked.

"Indeed, I do, Monsieur,' I answered. 'At Marseilles the *chastre* is a very rare bird. I never saw but one there in all my life—an extraordinary bird it was, Monsieur; in fact I am indebted to it for the pleasure of now being in your company.'

"'Pooh! You had better reserve your fire for the pheasants, hares and roes.'

"'What! are there any such animals here, Monsieur?' I cried in amazement.

"'Look!' cried the lieutenant. 'There is one close

to you now!' Indeed, at that very moment a young roe buck bounded past me at a distance of no more than a dozen paces.

"As we advanced, I perceived every now and then various gardeners whom I seemed to have seen somewhere before, gamekeepers, also, whose faces were not unknown to me. They all bowed, gentlemen; yet it occurred to me that they were merely my former brigand companions in different attire. But I had seen so many marvels that I was resolved to let nothing puzzle my brain in future.

"We fired in turn. The park was of great extent, and walled in, with here and there a little stretch of iron railings to allow a view of the surrounding scenery, which was magnificent. I was near some of these railings when Monsieur de Beaumanoir fired at a pheasant.

"At this moment a young countryman, who was looking through the railings, said to me: '*Signore, questo castello, il castello d' Anticoli?*'

"'Excuse me, my good man,' I answered, approaching him. 'I do not understand Italian. Speak to me in French and I shall be pleased to answer you.'

"'What, is it you, Monsieur Louet?' this seeming peasant then exclaimed.

"'Yes, it is I, but how do you know me?' I inquired.

"'Why, don't you remember me?'

"'Unfortunately, no.'

"'You don't remember the Hussar officer, your travelling companion?'

"'Why, is it you, Monsieur Ernest?' I exclaimed. 'How delighted Mademoiselle Zéphirine will be!'

"'Is she really here?'

"'Certainly she is, Monsieur Ernest. She is a prisoner like myself.'

"'Then Captain Tonino——'

"'Is the Count of Villaforte——'

"'And this property——'

" ' A den of brigands, Monsieur ! '

" ' That is all I wished to know ! Good-bye, my dear Monsieur Louet. If we should be seen chatting together suspicions might be aroused. Tell Zéphirine that she will hear from me to-morrow.'

" Thereupon he bounded into the forest.

" ' Bring it, Romeo, bring it ! ' Monsieur de Beaumanoir was calling.

" I ran towards him. ' Ah ! you have brought it down,' said I, ' a fine cock pheasant, Monsieur, an extremely fine bird.'

" ' Yes, yes, there it lies ! But to whom were you speaking, Monsieur Louet ? '

" ' To a peasant who asked me a question in Italian and to whom I replied that unfortunately I did not understand the language.'

" ' Indeed ! ' said Monsieur de Beaumanoir in a tone expressive of considerable doubt, accompanied by a distrustful glance. And after reloading his gun, he added: ' I think, my dear Monsieur Louet, that as I speak Italian it will be best for me to keep on the side nearest to the wall. In that way, as there may be other peasants desirous of asking you questions, I will undertake to answer them.'

" ' As you please, Monsieur de Beaumanoir,' I replied, ' you are in charge here.'

" I then immediately changed places with him. But he looked in vain, gentlemen, he saw nobody ! "

* * * * * *

" We had some superb sport. True, Monsieur de Beaumanoir was an excellent shot. At last, at four o'clock, we walked back to the house, and then, as the Count of Villaforte and Mademoiselle Zéphirine had not returned from their ride, I retired to my room, intending to prepare for dinner.

" However, as I did not need two hours to dress, I took my violoncello and played a few bars of music. The

instrument was indeed an excellent one, and I quite made up my mind that I would not part with it.

"At half-past five I went down to the drawing-room. I was the first there, but the Count of Villaforte and Mademoiselle Zéphirine joined me a moment afterwards.

"'Well, my dear Louet,' said Mademoiselle, 'have you enjoyed yourself?'

"'I should be difficult to please if I hadn't, Mademoiselle,' I answered; 'and you?'

"'Oh! yes, exceedingly. The environs of Anticoli are delightful.'

"'Captain!' at this moment called the lieutenant, opening the door and popping his head into the room.

"'Who calls me Captain? I am not the Captain here, my dear Beaumanoir, I am the Count of Villaforte,' said Tonino.

"'Captain,' the other repeated in spite of this rebuke, 'pray come outside for a moment, it is a matter of importance.'

"'Excuse me then,' said the captain to Zéphirine and me, 'business, you know, before everything.'

"'Do as you wish, Count, do as you wish,' I answered.

"He left the room. I waited till the door was shut, and when I felt certain he could not hear me, I said to Mademoiselle Zéphirine: 'I have seen Monsieur Ernest.'

"'When?'

"'To-day.'

"'Indeed!—Ah! the dear fellow, he must have followed us from inn to inn!'

"'Probably, unless he be a sorcerer.'

"'And did he not give you a message for me?'

"'He said you would hear from him to-morrow.'

"'Oh! how pleased I am! He will deliver us, Monsieur Louet!'

"'But, Mademoiselle,' said I, 'how does it happen that you keep such company as you despise it so much?'

"'Why,' she retorted, 'how does it happen that you yourself share it?'

"'I was led into it by force.'

"'And do you think then that I came willingly? No, indeed! Tonino saw me dance at the theatre of Bologna, fell in love with me, and carried me off!'

"'Good heavens! Then this man has no more respect for dancers than for musicians!'

"'But what worries me most is that Ernest may have thought I had run away with a Cardinal, for there was a Cardinal courting me at the time!'

"'Oh!'

"'Silence!—Tonino is coming back!

"'Well? well? What is the matter?' Zéphirine exclaimed as she ran towards the captain. 'Oh! how dreadfully upset you look! Is the news very bad then?'

"'At least it is not good,' said he.

"'Has it come from a reliable source?' asked Zéphirine again, with an anxiety which was now far from being feigned.

"'From the best of all sources—from a friend who is in the police service.'

"'Good heavens! What do you fear, then?'

"'Nothing positive, but something is being plotted against us. We were tracked from Chianciano as far as the Osteria Barberini. They only lost our track behind Monte Gennaro. So, my dear child, I fear we must defer our projected visit to the Teatro della Valle to-morrow evening.'

"'But that won't prevent us from dining, will it, Captain?'

"'Here comes the answer,' he replied.

"'His Excellency is served,' at that moment exclaimed a footman, opening the door.

"On entering the dining-room, I perceived a brace of pistols lying beside the captain's plate, and another pair beside the lieutenant's. Moreover, each time the door was opened by the footman who served us, I espied two bandits in the hall, each carrying a carbine. Under these circum-

stances, our repast, as you may suppose, was a silent one, and though no mishap occurred, I felt instinctively that a catastrophe was approaching, and I could not think of it without experiencing anxiety.

"The meal over, the captain placed sentries in various parts.

"'My little Rina,' said he, 'I must apologize for not keeping you company this evening, but I have to watch over our safety. By-and-by, instead of going to bed, you would do well to lie down with your clothes on, for we may be disturbed during the night, and I should then like you to be quite ready so that I may take you to a place of safety.'

"'I will do whatever you wish,' Mademoiselle Zéphirine replied.

"'And I shall be obliged if you, Monsieur Louet, will take the same precautions.'

"'I am at your orders, Monsieur le Comte.'

"'Now, my little Zéphirine,' he resumed, 'I should like you to leave us in possession of the ground floor, for we have a few arrangements to make at which a lady's presence is not desirable.'

"'I will go up to my room,' said Mademoiselle Zéphirine.

"'And I as well,' I added.

"The captain turned away to ring a bell.

"'Things are progressing well, Monsieur Louet,' Zéphirine whispered to me, rubbing her hands the while.

"'They are progressing badly, Mademoiselle Zéphirine,' I responded, shaking my head.

"'Conduct this lady and gentleman to their rooms,' said the captain in Italian to the men who answered his summons. And he added something which we could not hear.

"'I hope all this is merely a false alarm,' said Mademoiselle Zéphirine, as she rose to go.

"'H'm, I don't know why, but I have a bad presentiment,' the captain answered. 'Good-night—good-night, Monsieur Louet.'

" ' Good-night, Captain,' I responded, as I quitted the room.

" Mademoiselle Zéphirine had remained a little in the rear; when I had climbed a dozen steps of the staircase she suddenly disappeared. I wished to wait for her, but the brigand who escorted me pushed me on by the shoulders.

" I entered my room, the man left me the lamp he was carrying, and then, as he went off, locked my door behind him.

" ' Dear me! ' I thought, ' it seems that I am a prisoner.'

" My only course was to lie down, and that was what I did. I spent several hours absorbed in melancholy thoughts, but by degrees my mind became confused. From time to time, thinking that I heard some suspicious noise, I gave a start, opened my eyes, and listened. But eventually my sleepiness mastered me, and I dozed off.

" I cannot tell how long my slumber had lasted when a men entered my room and shook me. ' *Subito, subito !*—— quick, quick! ' he called.

" ' Is anything the matter, Monsieur? ' I asked, sitting up on the bed.

" ' *Non, c'e niente, ma bisogna seguir mi.*' ' No, it is nothing, but you must follow me.'

" I gathered that the man was telling me to follow him, for I had often heard the word *seguir* during my intercourse with the brigands.

" ' But where am I to *seguir* you? ' I asked him.

" ' *Non capisco—Avanti, avanti !* ' ' I don't understand —Forward, forward! '

" ' Excuse me,' said I, ' but I won't leave my 'cello here, I do not wish any harm to happen to my instrument. I hope I am not forbidden to take it.'

" The brigand let me understand that I might do so, but that I must make haste. Accordingly, I hoisted the 'cello on my back and followed him. He led me along several passages and then down a small staircase, at the

foot of which he opened a door. We then found ourselves in the grounds. The dawn was just appearing.

"I cannot tell you, gentlemen, how many turns and twists we made as we crossed the park. At last we plunged into a maze of trees, in the darkest part of which we saw the entrance of a grotto.

"I understood that this was to be my abode for the present, and I was groping hither and thither, trying to take my bearings, when somebody's hand caught hold of mine. I was about to raise a cry, but I remarked that the hand I felt was very smooth, and could not, therefore, be a brigand's.

"'Hush!' said a soft voice.

"'I won't breathe a word, Mademoiselle,' I answered.

"'Put your 'cello over there.'

"I obeyed, and then inquired: 'Well, what has happened?'

"'We are surrounded by a regiment, and Ernest commands it!'

"'Ah! the brave fellow!'

"'You see how much he loves me! He has followed us all the way from Sienna. What a blessing it is that you were taken prisoner, my dear Monsieur Louet!'

"'Yes, a great blessing!' I answered.

"'And it was my own idea too.'

"'What! Yours?'

"'Yes, certainly. I said I could not dance without a musician, and they kept on seeking one until, at last, they found you.'

"'So it is to you that I am indebted——'

"'Yes, to me, my dear Monsieur Louet, to me. Besides which, by means of your ring I was everywhere enabled to inform Ernest of our travelling plans.'

"'But why have we been consigned to this grotto?'

"'Because it is the most retired spot on the park, and the last where the soldiers are likely to look for us. Besides,

there's a door yonder, which probably leads to some vault, affording a passage into the fields.'

"'But in that case, would it not be best for us to open the door and escape that way, Mademoiselle?'

"'Yes, it would, but unfortunately the door is locked.'

"Just then we heard the report of a fire-arm. 'Listen!' I exclaimed.

"'Good! it is beginning,' said Zéphirine.

"'Dear, dear me! Where can we hide?' I stammered.

"'Well, I hardly think we can be better hidden than here.'

"'At least, Mademoiselle Zéphirine,' said I, 'you will not forsake me?'

"'Forsake a friend? Never! But upon one condition, mind. Ah! hark! hark!'

"The fusillade was becoming louder, it seemed as if the soldiers were firing in volleys.

"'What condition, Mademoiselle?' I faltered, 'I will do anything you please.'

"'Well, if Ernest should question you about that rascally captain, you must tell him the strict truth, that I turned my back on the monster all the time, and never gave him the slightest encouragement.'

"'But—but will he believe it, Mademoiselle?'

"'What a simpleton you are, Monsieur Louet! He will believe whatever I choose. Haven't I told you that he is in love with me?'

"'Mademoiselle,' I said, taking hold of her hand, 'the firing seems to increase——'

"'So much the better!' she cried. Ah! gentlemen, that young woman was a very lioness!

"I myself felt emboldened, and, to form some idea of what was taking place, I went towards the mouth of the grotto.

"'*Dietro, dietro!*' then cried two brigands who were stationed there; and I understood by their imperative gestures that I was to keep back. So I hurriedly did so.

" Meanwhile, things became warmer and warmer every minute. Ah! gentlemen, it was decreed that I should participate in battle—yes, both battles at sea and battles on land pursued me!

" ' The firing seems to be coming nearer,' said Mademoiselle Zéphirine at last.

" ' I am afraid so, Mademoiselle,' I answered.

" ' But, on the contrary, you ought to be delighted!' she exclaimed; ' why, it means that the brigands are retreating.'

" ' I *am* delighted, Mademoiselle, but I wish they would not retreat this way.'

" Shrieks were now heard as if men were being butchered, and in fact so they were—as we saw for ourselves a little later. And amid all those cries arose the rattle of musketry, the blaring of bugles, the beating of drums. The very smell of the powder reached us. And the reports came nearer and nearer, till at last it seemed to me that the combatants were not more than a hundred paces from the grotto.

" Suddenly we heard a sigh, then the heavy thud of a falling body, and one of our two guards rolled into the grotto, struggling convulsively. He had been hit by a random bullet, and as a ray of light reached that part of the grotto where he lay, we could not help witnessing his death-throes. But I must acknowledge that at this sight Mademoiselle Zéphirine, so brave only a moment previously, caught hold of my hands and trembled.

" ' Oh! Monsieur Louet,' she said, ' how dreadful it is to see a man die!'

" But at that same moment we heard a voice calling, ' Stop, scoundrel, stop! Wait for me!'

" ' Ernest,' cried Mademoiselle Zéphirine. ' It is Ernest's voice!' And, with renewed courage, she was darting towards the mouth of the grotto, when the brigand captain, covered with blood, plunged into it.

" ' Zéphirine!' he called wildly, ' Zéphirine! Where are you?'

"As he came from the daylight—for the dawn had now risen—he could not at first distinguish us in that dim retreat. Besides, Mademoiselle Zéphirine motioned me neither to stir nor speak. But after the captain had remained blinded, as it were, for a few moments, his eyes became accustomed to the dimness and searched the depths of the grotto. He then saw us, and sprang forward like a tiger.

"'Why do you not answer when I call you, Zéphirine?' he cried. 'Come, come!' And catching her by one arm he tried to drag her to the door at the far end of the cavern.

"'Where are you taking me? Where are you taking me?' cried the poor girl.

"'Come with me, come!'

"'But I don't want to go with you,' she answered amid her struggles.

"'What! not go with me!'

"'No, no! Why should I follow you? I don't love you! You carried me off by force; I will not follow you! Ernest! Ernest! Here! here!'

"'Ernest! Ernest!' gasped the captain, savagely. 'Ah! so it was you who betrayed us!'

"'Monsieur Louet!' shrieked Zéphirine, 'if you are a man, help, quick, save me!'

"Gentlemen, I saw a dagger gleaming! I had no weapon, but I seized my 'cello by the neck, I raised it like a club, and I dealt the captain such a tremendous blow on the skull that the wood broke, and his head was caught in it. Either the violence of my blow or his amazement at finding his head thus imprisoned utterly unnerved the captain; he flung out his arms and vented such a prodigious roar that the whole grotto shook!

"'Zéphirine! Zéphirine!' somebody was now calling outside.

"'Ernest! Ernest!' the young woman answered, bounding towards the entrance.

"'Mademoiselle Zéphirine!' I, in my turn, shouted, as I followed her, quite frightened by my own handiwork.

"I have told you, gentlemen, that this young person was as light as any fawn. She was already in the officer's arms, and I hastened to hide myself behind the loving pair.

"'There! there!' the young lieutenant called, showing the mouth of the grotto to a dozen soldiers who had just run up, and who immediately sprang into the cavern. 'He is there, bring him out, dead or alive!'

"Five minutes later they reappeared. They had only found the 'cello with the hole which the captain's head had left in it. He himself had escaped by the farther door.

"But Zéphirine was speaking: 'Here, Ernest,' said she, 'here is my preserver. The dagger was here'—and she pointed to her breast—'when he rushed to my help. For I always, always repulsed the monster! And he wanted to kill me to prevent me from joining you!'

"'Really, my love?' said Ernest.

"'Ah! my dear, can you doubt it? Ask, ask Monsieur Louet!'

"'Monsieur,' I said, 'I swear to you——'

"'Enough!' Monsieur Ernest interrupted. 'No oaths, please! You must not think for a moment that I don't trust her word.'

"'I only think, Monsieur Ernest, with all due deference to you, that as the captain has escaped, the best thing to do now is to place Mademoiselle Zéphirine in safety.'

"'You are right, Monsieur Louet. Come, Zéphirine.'

"We walked back to the villa, and in doing so had to cross the battlefield. We saw ten or twelve corpses lying there, and, at the foot of the house-steps, another barred the way.

"'Remove that carcase!' said a grizzled old corporal, who with two men preceded us.

"The two men turned the body over, and I then recognized the very last of the Beaumanoirs.

"We did not remain long in the villa. Monsieur Ernest left a garrison there, and when Mademoiselle Zéphirine and I had got into the carriage, he, with twelve men armed to the teeth, served as our escort. I need hardly mention, gentlemen, that I had again taken possession of my gun, my game-bag, and my hundred crowns. I only regretted the loss of my poor 'cello, but Mademoiselle Zéphirine, apparently, regretted nothing whatever. She seemed wild with delight.

"After about an hour's travelling I caught sight of a large city, with a huge dome, on the horizon.

"'If it is not indiscreet on my part, Monsieur Ernest,' I said, popping my head out of the carriage window, 'may I inquire the name of that city?'

"'The one ahead?'

"'Yes, the one ahead, Monsieur!'

"'Why, that is Rome.'

"'Indeed! Rome? Really?'

"'Without any doubt.'

"'Well, Monsieur, I am delighted,' said I; 'upon my word, quite delighted. I have always been most desirous of seeing Rome.'

"Two hours later we entered the city. It was really Rome, Monsieur Dumas," said Monsieur Louet.

"And did you see the Pope also?" I inquired, "for I remember that was one of your desires."

"Why, you must know," replied Monsieur Louet, "that the worthy old man was then at Fontainebleau. However, I saw him on his return in 1814, him and his successors, for as Monsieur Ernest procured me an engagement as fourth-bass player at the Teatro della Valle, I remained at Rome till 1830. When I then returned to Marseilles—as I had been absent a score of years—they would not at first give me back my place in the orchestra. They regarded me as an impostor, like the false Martin Guerre."

"And what became of Mademoiselle Zéphirine?"

"I heard, Monsieur, that she married Monsieur Ernest, whose surname I never knew, and that she became a lady of great worth and high degree."

"And did you ever see anything more of the brigand captain?"

"Indeed, I did. Three years later he was recognized and arrested at the Teatro della Valle, and I had the pain of seeing him hanged. And that, gentlemen, is how, from having one evening forgotten to discharge my gun, which consequently hung fire when I tried to wing a *chastre*, I ended by visiting Italy and spending twenty years in Rome."

"Well, do you know what time it is?" now said Méry, pulling his watch from his fob; "it is four o'clock in the morning—a pretty time to go to bed!"

"Fortunately," said Monsieur Louet, pointing to Jadin and the other members of our party, who were already slumbering, "fortunately those gentlemen have not waited to snatch a little sleep."

ALFRED DE MUSSET

(1810–1857)

MIMI PINSON

(Translated by Norman Porter)

I

Among the students who attended the lectures, last year, at the School of Medicine, there was one called Eugène Aubert. He was a young man of good family, about nineteen years of age. His parents lived in the country and made him a small but sufficient allowance. He lived a quiet life and was considered to have a mild character. His friends loved him; always finding him kind and helpful, generous and open-hearted. The only fault with which he could be reproached was a singular liking for reverie and solitude, and he had such an excessive reserve in his conversation and his smallest actions that he was nicknamed the "Little Girl," a description, moreover, at which he laughed himself, and on which his friends did not place any construction that could offend him, believing him to be as courageous as anyone else when necessary; but it must be admitted that his conduct justified, in a small way, this appellation, particularly by the way it contrasted with the habits of his companions. As long as it was a question of work, he was the first; but if it was a suggestion of a pleasure party, a dinner at the *Moulin de Beurre*, or a dance at the *Chaumière*, the "Little Girl" shook his head and returned to his room. This was a monstrous state of affairs to the students; not only had Eugène no mistress, although his youth and his appearance would have helped him considerably, but he had never been seen flirting at a bar with

a grisette, an immemorial custom in the Quartier Latin. The beauties who thronged the Montagne Sainte-Geneviève, and shared among themselves the love affairs of the schools, inspired him with such a repugnance that it almost amounted to aversion. He regarded them as a species apart, dangerous, ungrateful, and depraved, born to disseminate illness and misfortune in exchange for a few pleasures. Avoid all the women there, he said to himself, they are bad lots.

And unfortunately he found too many examples to justify the horror with which they inspired him. The quarrels, the dissipations, sometimes even the ruin which followed these transient liaisons, with their outward aspect of happiness, were only too easy to name; last year like to-day, and probably the same as next year.

Naturally Eugène's friends laughed continually at his morals and scruples.

"What do you mean?" one of his friends called Marcel often asked him, who pretended to be a jovial fellow, "what does one fault prove, or one accidental happening?"

"That one should abstain," replied Eugène, "for fear of it happening a second time."

"Wrong reasoning," rejoined Marcel, "the argument of a *capucin de carte*, who falls if his neighbour stumbles. What are you worrying yourself about? Which of us has not lost at the game? Is that a reason for turning monk? One has no money and another only drinks water; is that a reason for Élise to lose her appetite? Whose fault is it if your neighbour pawns his watch so that he may go to Montmorency and cut a caper? No one is hurt by it. You make love to Rosalie and get a sword thrust through you; she turns her back on you, quite naturally: does she suffer by it? They are the little inconveniences of which life is full, and even so they are much less common than you suppose. Take a Sunday, when it is fine, and the many friendly couples in the cafés in the gardens, and the public-

houses. Look at those great omnibuses, crowded with grisettes, going to Ranelagh or Belleville. Count those who go out, on a fête day, from the Quartier Saint-Jacques: the battalions of dressmakers, the armies of sempstresses, the crowds of tobacconists; they all amuse themselves, they all have their love affairs, they all go to lie down around Paris under the arbours of the countryside, like flocks of sparrows. If it rains they all go to the play, eat oranges and weep; for these people eat a lot, it is true, and weep readily; which goes to show a good disposition. But what harm do those poor women do, who have sewn, basted, hemmed, and mended all the week, in showing an example, on Sundays, of forgetting troubles and looking to the future? And what could an honest man do better, who on his part, having spent a week dissecting things unpleasant, clears his eyes by looking at a pretty face, a rounded leg, and life?"

"Whited sepulchres," said Eugène.

"I say and maintain," continued Marcel, "that one must and should sing the praises of the grisettes, and that friendship with them does no harm. First, they are virtuous, for they spend the day in making garments indispensable to modesty and decency; secondly, they are courteous, for there is no proprietress of a shop who does not see that her shop-girls speak politely to customers; thirdly, they are very careful and very clean, inasmuch as they constantly have in their hands lingerie which they must not soil, under penalty of being fined; fourthly, they are sincere, because they drink ratafia; in the fifth place, they are economical and frugal, for they have to work hard to make thirty sous, and if on occasions they show themselves greedy and extravagant, it is never with their own money; sixthly, they are very cheerful, because the work they do is in general deadly tedious, so they frisk like a fish in water as soon as their work is done. Another thing that one finds in them is that they are not at all exacting; for as they spend their life pinned

to a chair from which they cannot move, they can't run after their lovers like ladies of good society. Besides, they are not loquacious, for they have to count their stitches. They do not spend much on their shoes, because they do not walk much, nor for their dress, for hardly anyone gives them credit. If they are accused of inconstancy, it is not from natural naughtiness; but from the temptation of the great number of different people who pass their shops. From another angle they prove convincingly that they are capable of genuine passion, by the great number of them who throw themselves daily into the Seine or out of the window, or asphyxiate themselves in their homes. It is true, they have the misfortune of being nearly always hungry and thirsty, precisely because of their temperance; for it is notorious that they can be satisfied with a glass of beer and a cigarette for a meal; a valuable quality that is rarely met with at home. In short, I maintain that they are good, lovable, faithful, and impartial, and it is regrettable when they finish in a hospital."

Whilst Marcel was talking like this, as they were seated at a café, he became rather heated, and filling his friend's glass, asked him to drink the health of Mademoiselle Pinson, who was their neighbour; but Eugène, while Marcel continued to harangue his comrades, took his hat and stole away quietly.

II

Mademoiselle Pinson could not exactly be described as a *jolie femme*. There is a great deal of difference between a *jolie femme* and a *jolie grisette*. If a *jolie femme*, recognized as such, in Parisian terms, bethinks herself of wearing a small bonnet, a dress of gingham, and a silk apron, she will be dressed, it is true, like a *jolie grisette*. But if a grisette puts on a hat, a velvet mantle and a silk dress, she does not become a *jolie femme*; on the contrary, it is probable she would look like a portmanteau, and deceive no one. The

difference arises from the conditions in which these two beings live, and principally in that cardboard wheel, covered with material and called a hat, which women consider correct to apply to all sides of the head, rather resembling a horse's blinkers. (It should be noted meanwhile that the blinkers prevent the horses from seeing one side or the other, and that the piece of cardboard does not stop anything!)

Whatever it is made of, a small bonnet demands a snub nose, which in its turn should be above a well-cut mouth, in which are good teeth, with a round face as frame. A round face should have sparkling eyes; it is better that they should be as black as possible, and the eyebrows well defined. The hair must be *ad libitum* and in keeping with the black eyes. Such an appearance is far from beauty as generally understood. One would rather describe it as a doll's face, the typical face of the grisette, who would perhaps be ugly under the wheel of cardboard, but whom the bonnet can somehow make charming, more pretty than beautiful. Such was the appearance of Mademoiselle Pinson.

Marcel resolved in his mind that Eugène should pay his addresses to this young lady. Why? Either I know nothing about it, or else because he himself was the admirer of Mademoiselle Zelia, the intimate friend of Mademoiselle Pinson, and it seemed to him natural and proper to arrange matters to suit himself, and to make love in couples. Such plans are not uncommon, and succeed fairly often, opportunity being, since the world existed, the greatest of all temptations. Who can say what events are brought about, happy or unhappy, of love, of quarrels, of joys or of sorrows, by communicating doors, a secret staircase, a corridor, or a broken-down wheel?

Nevertheless, there are certain characters who deny themselves these opportunities. They prefer to work for their enjoyments, not to win them by chance, and they are disposed to make love just because they find themselves

next to a pretty woman in a carriage. Such was Eugène, and Marcel knew it; however, he had long ago formulated a fairly simple plan, that he believed to be admirable, and above all infallible, to break down the resistance of his friend.

He made up his mind to give a supper, and could not think of any more appropriate day than his own birthday. He ordered two dozen bottles of beer to be sent to his rooms, a large piece of cold veal with a salad, an enormous *galette de plomb*, and a bottle of champagne.

First he invited two students of his acquaintance, then he told Mademoiselle Zelia that he was giving a party in his rooms, and that she was to bring Mademoiselle Pinson. They were on no account to fail to come. Marcel had the reputation, quite justly, of being one of the "bloods" of the Quartier Latin, one of those people whom one does not refuse. Scarcely had the clock struck seven when the two grisettes knocked at the door of the student's room; Mademoiselle Zelia in a short dress, grey boots and a flower-trimmed bonnet, Mademoiselle Pinson, more modest, dressed in a black coat which she did not remove, and which gave her, so it was said, a slightly Spanish air, of which she was very proud. Both of them were ignorant, it is hoped, of their host's secret designs.

Marcel had not made the mistake of asking Eugène beforehand; he was too certain of a refusal in that case. It was only after the ladies had sat down to table, and after the first glass had been emptied, that he asked permission to absent himself for a few minutes to go and fetch a friend, and went to the house where Eugène lived. He found him, as usual, at his work, alone, surrounded by his books. After a few remarks, he started gently his usual expostulations; that he was overtiring himself, that he was wrong in not taking any kind of distraction, then he suggested a short walk. Eugène, accepted, he was a little tired, in fact, as he had been working all day; the two young men went out

together, and after strolling in the Luxembourg Gardens, it was not difficult for Marcel to persuade his friend to return with him to his rooms.

The two grisettes, left alone, and probably tired of waiting, had begun to make themselves at home; they had taken off their bonnets and shawls, and singing, danced a country dance, not without helping themselves to the refreshments, from time to time. With bright eyes and animated faces they ceased their dance, slightly out of breath, as Eugène bowed to them somewhat timidly, looking surprised. Because of his solitary habits, he was scarcely known to them; they had soon taken in his appearance, from head to feet, with that unabashed curiosity which is the privilege of their type; then going on with their singing and dancing, as if nothing had happened. The new-comer, somewhat disconcerted, took a few steps backwards, when Marcel, having closed and locked the door, threw the key noisily on the table.

"No one else yet," he exclaimed. "What are my friends doing? But never mind, the wild man is ours. Ladies, allow me to present to you the most virtuous young man in France and Navarre, who has long wished to make your acquaintance, and is, particularly, a great admirer of Mademoiselle Pinson."

The country dance ceased once more; Mademoiselle Pinson bowed slightly and replaced her bonnet.

"Eugène," cried Marcel, "to-day is my birthday; these two ladies have very kindly come here to celebrate it with us. It is true I nearly brought you here by force; but I hope that, at our united request, you will stay here willingly. It is now nearly eight o'clock; we have time to smoke a pipe whilst waiting for our appetites."

Speaking thus, he threw a significant look at Mademoiselle Pinson, who, understanding it, bowed once more, smiling, and said gently to Eugène:

"Yes, Monsieur, we beg you to." At this moment the

two students invited by Marcel knocked at the door. Eugène, realizing that he could not withdraw without being ungracious, resignedly took his seat with the others.

III

The supper was long and noisy. The men having commenced by filling the room with a fog of smoke, drank the more to refresh themselves. The ladies made most of the conversation, and amused the company with tales more or less scandalous, at the expense of their friends and acquaintances, and adventures more or less true, from the workroom. If the stories lacked probability, they did not lack spice. Two lawyers' clerks, if they were to be believed, had made a profit of twenty thousand francs by dealing in Spanish Funds, and had spent it in six weeks on two girls in a glove shop. The son of one of the richest bankers in Paris offered a well-known dressmaker a box at the opera and a house in the country, which she had refused, preferring to look after her parents and remain faithful to a clerk at the Deux-Magots. A certain personage, who must not be named, and whose rank obliged him to keep the greatest secrecy, went incognito to visit an embroideress in the Passage Pont-Neuf; the latter had been suddenly carried away by the authorities in a post-chaise, at midnight, given a pocket-book full of bank-notes and shipped to the United States, etc.

" Enough," said Marcel, " we know that. Zelia invents, and as to Mademoiselle Mimi (as Mademoiselle Pinson was called familiarly), her information is not correct. Your lawyers' clerks only got swindled; your banker offered an orange, and your embroideress is so far from the United States that she is to be seen daily, from twelve to four, at the hospital of La Charité, where she has gone to live owing to lack of food."

Eugène was seated near to Mademoiselle Pinson. He thought he saw her turn pale at this last word, spoken with

such indifference. But, almost immediately she rose, lit a cigarette, and said easily:

"Silence in your turn. . . . I claim to speak. As Monsieur Marcel does not believe in fables, I will tell you a true story, 'et quorum pars magna fui.'"

"Do you speak Latin?" said Eugène.

"As you see," Mademoiselle Pinson replied; "that sentence comes to me from an uncle, who served under the great Napoleon, and never failed to use it when telling the story of a battle. If you do not know the meaning of these words you may learn without payment. They mean, 'I give you my word of honour.' You know that I went last week, with one of my friends, to the Odéon. . . ."

"Wait a minute," said Marcel, "until I cut the cake."

"Cut, but listen," replied Mademoiselle Pinson. "I had gone with Blanchette and Rougette to the Odéon to see a tragedy. Rougette, as you know, has just lost her grandmother; she inherited four hundred francs. We took a box; three students were in the stalls; these young men noticed us, and, with the excuse of our being alone, invited us to supper."

"Outright—directly?" asked Marcel; "really it was kind. And I suppose you refused?"

"No, sir!" said Mademoiselle Pinson; "we accepted and, at the interval, without waiting for the end of the piece, we went to Viot."

"With your beaux?"

"With our beaux. The waiter, to be sure, began by telling us that there was nothing left; but such a state of affairs could not stop us. We insisted that they should send out and get what was wanting. Rougette ordered a regular wedding feast: prawns, a sweet omelette, mussels, fritters, eggs *à la neige*, everything there was to be had for a good dinner. To tell the truth, our young acquaintances looked rather sour. . . ."

"I should think so," said Marcel.

"We did not mind. The supper brought, we began to imitate fine ladies. We did not like anything, everything displeased us. As soon as one dish was tasted we sent it away and insisted on another being brought. 'Waiter, take that away . . . it won't do at all . . . where did you get such stuff from?' Our friends wanted to eat, but were not allowed to. In short we supped as Sancho dined, and anger made us even break some crockery."

"Good behaviour! And what about paying?"

"Precisely the question the three unknown were asking themselves. It seemed to us, from what we heard of a whispered conversation they had together, that one of them possessed six francs, another very much less, and the third only had a watch, which he generously drew from his pocket. In this condition the three unfortunates went to the cashier, with the object of getting some kind of credit. And what do you think the reply was?"

"I should think," said Marcel, "that they kept you as security, and sent them to the police station."

"You are wrong," said Mademoiselle Pinson. "Before going up to the supper-room, Rougette had taken their measure and paid for everything in advance. Imagine the sensation when Viot said to them: 'Gentlemen, the account is already settled!' Our unknown friends looked at us dumbfounded with woeful stupefaction mingled with pure gratitude. We, in the meantime, pretending not to notice anything, walked down and had a cab called.

"'Dear Marquise,' said Rougette to me, 'we must take these gentlemen to their homes. . . .' 'Willingly, dear Comtesse,' I replied. Our poor lovers did not know what to say. Can you imagine how put out they were . . . they declined our offer, not wishing us to take them home, and would not give their addresses. . . . I really believe that they thought we were society ladies, and they lived in the rue du Chat-qui-pêche!"

The two student friends of Marcel, who, up to the present,

had only smoked and drunk in silence, did not seem at all pleased with this story. They looked black; perhaps they knew as much as Mademoiselle Pinson did about this unlucky supper, for they looked at her uneasily as Marcel said to them, laughing:

"Give their names, Mademoiselle Mimi. As it was last week it will not hurt anyone."

"Never, Monsieur," replied the grisette. "One may laugh at any man, but damage his career, never. . . ."

"You are right," said Eugène, "and in this case you are perhaps acting more wisely than you think. Among all the young men who fill these schools, there is scarcely one who has not at some time or other made some mistake, or done some foolish thing, and yet the most respectable and distinguished men in France come from them: doctors, magistrates. . . ."

"Yes," responded Marcel, "that is true. There are peers of France who dine at Flicoteaux and do not always have the means to pay their bill. But," he added, winking, "have you never seen your friends again?"

"Who do you take us for?" replied Mademoiselle Pinson, in a serious and almost offended manner; "do you know Blanchette and Rougette? And do you suppose that I . . . ?"

"That's all right," said Marcel, "don't be annoyed. But, listen, here is a nice trick. Three scatter-brains who have not perhaps sufficient to pay for their next day's dinner, and throw money away in order to mystify three poor devils as poor as themselves. . . ."

"Then why did they invite us to supper?" said Mademoiselle Pinson.

IV

With the cake appeared, in all its glory, the single bottle of champagne as dessert. With the wine the talk turned to singing. "I hear," said Marcel, "as Cervantes said, I hear

Zelia coughing; that is a sign that she wants to sing. But, if these gentlemen agree, it is I who am being fêted, and give myself the pleasure of asking Mademoiselle Mimi, if telling her anecdote has not made her hoarse, to give us a song. Eugène," he added, "be agreeable and take a glass of wine with your neighbour, and beg her to sing a song for me."

Eugène blushed and obeyed. Just as Mademoiselle Pinson had not disdained to induce him to remain, he bowed and said to her: "Yes, Mademoiselle, we beg you to."

At the same time he raised his glass and touched that of the grisette. From this light contact arose a clear and silver note; Mademoiselle Pinson caught this note and sang it with a pure fresh voice.

"Yes, I will," she said, "for my glass has given me the 'la.' But what do you wish me to sing? I am not conceited, I would have you know, but I do not know any songs of the *corps de garde*. I do not fill my memory with such stuff. . . ."

"We know that," said Marcel, "you are above such stuff; go your own way, opinions are free."

"Well," resumed Mademoiselle Pinson, "I will sing you, to show there's no ill-feeling, some verses written on me."

"One minute. . . . Who is the author?"

"My colleagues in the shop. It is what we compose while we are sewing, so you must not be too critical."

"Is there a chorus to your song?"

"Certainly; such a thing is always expected."

"In that case," said Marcel, "take your knives, and when the chorus comes beat on the table, but take care to do so in time. Zelia need not if she does not want to."

"Why not, rude boy?" demanded Zelia, angrily.

"For a very good reason," replied Marcel; "but if you wish to join in, take a cork, that will be less painful for our ears and your white hands."

Marcel had arranged all the glasses and plates in a circle

and seated himself in the middle of the table, his knife in his hand. The two students, guests at Rougette's supper, a little more cheerful, removed the bowls of their pipes so as to beat with the wooden mouthpieces; Eugène dreamed, Zelia pouted. Mademoiselle Pinson took a plate and requested permission to break it, to which Marcel replied with a gesture of consent, so the singer taking some pieces to use as castanets, began the song which her companions had composed, after having apologized for anything it contained flattering to herself. . . .

* * * * * *

The knives and the pipes, even the chairs, had contributed their noise, of course, at the end of each verse. The glasses danced on the table and the bottles, half-full, rocked joyously, tapping each other's necks.

"And so your good friends," said Marcel, "composed that song for you? For my part I think it is too affected. Give me those good old songs in which they don't mind what they say . . ." And he tuned up in a loud voice:

"*Nanette n'avait pas encore quinze ans . . .*"

"Enough, enough," said Mademoiselle Pinson; "let us dance, let us have a waltz. Can anyone here play?"

"I have what you want," said Marcel; "I have a guitar; but," he continued, while undoing the instrument, "my guitar is not all it should be; it lacks three of its strings."

"But here is a piano," said Zelia; "Marcel will play for our dance!"

Marcel glared at his mistress as if she had accused him of a crime. It was true he knew enough to play for a country-dance; but it was for him, as for many others, a species of torture to which he submitted very unwillingly.

Zelia, in betraying him, took her revenge for the cork.

"Are you mad?" said Marcel. "You know that that piano is only there for ornament, and God knows you are the only one who can get anything out of it. Where did you

get the idea that I could play dance music? I only know the *Marseillaise*, which I play with one finger. If you asked Eugène it would be much better; there is a boy who understands it, I am quite certain. You are the only one here sufficiently indiscreet to *do* such a thing without warning."

For the third time Eugène blushed and prepared, politely and tactfully, to do what he was asked. He sat down at the piano and a quadrille was arranged. This lasted nearly as long as the supper. After the quadrille came a waltz, after the waltz, the galop, for one still galops in the Quartier Latin. The ladies especially were indefatigable, gambolling and shouting with laughter enough to wake the neighbourhood. Soon Eugène, doubly tired by the noise and the late hour, fell into a sort of half-sleep, still playing mechanically, like the postilions who slumber whilst riding. The dancers moved to and fro in front of him like phantoms in a dream; and as there is nothing which makes a man melancholy so easily as listening to the laughter of others, melancholy, to which he was subject, took possession of him:—Sorrowful joy, he thought, miserable pleasures . . . moments that one imagines snatched from sorrow. . . . And who knows which one of those five people dancing so gaily in front of me is certain of the wherewithal for to-morrow's dinner?

As he was thus reflecting, Mademoiselle Pinson passed near him; he thought he saw her, whilst dancing, take a piece of cake from the table and surreptitiously put it in her pocket.

V

It was nearly daybreak when the company separated. Eugène, before going home, walked about the streets for a short time to get some fresh air. Still possessed by his melancholy thoughts, he repeated quietly to himself the words of the grisette's song:

> "*Elle n'a qu'une robe au monde*
> *Et qu'un bonnet. . . .*"

"Is it possible?" he said to himself. "Can misery get to such a pitch as to be freely shown and laughed at by one's own self? Can one laugh at one's lack of bread?"

The piece of cake that had been taken was a suspicious sign. Eugène could not help smiling and at the same time being moved with pity.

"Yet," he thought, "she took a piece of cake and not a piece of bread; perhaps this was greediness. Who knows? Perhaps it is a neighbour's child to whom she is taking a piece of cake, perhaps a talkative concierge, who would tell of her having passed a night out, a Cerberus to be appeased."

Not noticing where he was going, Eugène had wandered into that labyrinth of small streets behind the Carrefour Bucy, through which a carriage can scarcely pass. Just as he was retracing his steps, a woman came out of an old house, wrapped in an old dressing-gown, bare-headed, hair untidy, pale and wasted. She seemed so weak as to be scarcely able to walk; her knees bent; she leaned against the wall and seemed to want to go to a neighbouring door where there was a letter-box, in which to post a letter that she held in her hand. Surprised and shocked, Eugène approached her and asked where was she going, what was she looking for, and could he help her. At the same time he put out his arm to support her, as she seemed about to fall to the ground. But without answering him, she drew back with a mixture of fear and pride. She placed her letter on a projection, pointed with her finger to the box, and seeming to summon all her strength, said: "There!" Then, still clinging to the wall, she returned to her house. Eugène vainly tried to make her take his arm and answer his questions. She returned slowly to the dark and narrow alley from which she had come.

Eugène had picked up the letter; he started to walk to the box to post it, but he hesitated. This strange encounter had troubled him greatly, and he felt overcome with a kind

of horror mingled with a feeling of pity, so strong that, without thinking, he broke the seal almost involuntarily. It seemed to him hateful and impossible not to try, no matter how, to unravel such a mystery. Evidently that women was dying; was it from illness or hunger? In all probability from misery. Eugène opened the letter: it was addressed: *À Monsieur le Baron de X.*, and contained the following:

Read this letter, Monsieur, and for pity's sake do not reject my appeal. You can save me, and you only. Believe me when I say to you, save me, and you will have done a good action, which will bring you happiness. I am suffering from a severe illness, which has deprived me of that small amount of strength and courage that I once had. In August last I returned to the shop; my belongings have been seized by my former landlady, and I am practically certain that before Saturday I shall find myself without shelter. I have such a horror of dying of starvation that I resolved this morning to drown myself, for I have had no food for nearly twenty-four hours. As soon as I thought of you, a ray of hope lit up in my heart. I pray that I have not deceived myself. Monsieur, on my knees I beseech you, however little you may do for me, let me live for a few more days; I am afraid of dying, for I am only twenty-three years old. . . . I shall perhaps, with a little help, succeed in surviving until the first of the next month. If I only knew with what words to arouse your pity, I would write them, but none come into my thoughts. I can only deplore my inability, for I am afraid you will treat my letter as is usually done when such are received: you will destroy it without thinking that a poor woman is there, watching the hours and the minutes go by in the hope that you would have thought it too cruel to leave her in such suspense. It is not the idea of giving a louis, a small thing for you, that will restrain you, I am quite sure; it seems to me that nothing is simpler for you than to place your alms in an envelope and address it: "À Mademoiselle Bertin, 7, rue de l'Éperon." I have changed my name since going to work in a shop, as mine was my mother's. On leaving your house, give the letter to

a commissionaire. I shall wait Thursday and Friday and pray fervently that something will soften your heart.

It occurs to me that you have no idea of such misery; but if you would see me you would be convinced.

Rougette.

If Eugène had at first been touched on reading these lines, one can well believe his astonishment when he saw the signature. So this was the same girl who had foolishly wasted her money on pleasure parties; and think of that ridiculous supper mentioned by Mademoiselle Pinson; it was she, reduced by misfortune to such suffering, and such an appeal. . . . So much improvidence and folly appeared to Eugène as an unbelievable dream. But undoubtedly the signature was there; and Mademoiselle Pinson, in the course of the evening, had mentioned the *nom de guerre* of her friend Rougette, now become Mademoiselle Bertin. How was it that she found herself suddenly abandoned, without help, without bread, almost without shelter? What were her friends of yesterday doing, whilst she was perhaps dying in some attic of that house. And what kind of house was it in which one could exist in such a manner?

This was not the time for indulging in such surmises; it was most urgent to go and relieve the poor creature's starvation.

Eugène began by entering a provision shop, which had just been opened, and buying what he could find. That done, he proceeded, followed by a waiter, towards the lodging of Rougette; but he experienced a feeling of embarrassment at the thought of presenting himself so abruptly. The poor girl's pride, which he had discovered, made him fear, if not a refusal, at least a wound to her vanity; how to admit that he had read her letter? When he arrived at the door, he said to the waiter: "Do you know a young lady living in this house called Mademoiselle Bertin?"

"Oh yes, Monsieur," replied the waiter. "It is we who

habitually serve her. But if Monsieur is going there, it is not the day. She is now in the country."

"Who told you that?" asked Eugène.

"Pardi, Monsieur . . . it was the concierge. Mademoiselle Rougette likes to dine well, but she does not like paying. She would as soon order roast chicken and lobsters as anything; but to get her money is a question of several visits. . . . We also know, in this neighbourhood, when she is here and when she is away. . . ."

"She has returned," rejoined Eugène. "Go up to her room, deliver what you are carrying, and if she owes you anything, do not ask for it to-day. Should she wish to know who has sent her this, you will say it is the Baron de X."

With these words Eugène departed. On his way he readjusted, as well as he could, the seal of the letter and posted it. "After all," he thought, "Rougette will not refuse, and if she finds the answer to her letter somewhat prompt, she can get the explanation from her baron.

VI

But students, any more than grisettes, are not rich every day. Eugène understood full well that, to give an air of likelihood to the story that the waiter had to tell, he should have added the louis which Rougette had asked for to his gift; but there was the difficulty. Louis are not precisely common currency in the rue St. Jacques. On the other hand, Eugène had promised to pay the restaurant, but unfortunately at this moment his drawer was not better furnished than his pocket. That is why it was that, without any delay, he went on his way to the Place du Panthéon.

At this time there lived in this Place that famous barber who by going bankrupt ruined himself whilst ruining others. There, in the back shop, was carried on in secret large and small usury, where students poor and careless,

perhaps in love, borrowed money at enormous interest, spending it gaily in the evening and paying dearly for it next morning. Grisettes entered there furtively, with lowered head and shamed look, borrowing in order to go to a country party, on a faded hat, a dyed shawl, a chemise bought at the pawnshop. There, young men of good family, having need of twenty-five louis, signed bills for two or three thousand francs. Minors spent their fortune before they had got it; the imprudent ruined their families and threw away their future. From the titled courtesan, longing for a bracelet, to the necessitous college servant coveting a hare or a plate of lentils, all went there as if to the springs of Pactolus, and the usurious barber, proud of his clients and his exploits to the point of boasting about them, kept the prison of Clichy in repair pending his own visit there.

This was the dismal resort to which Eugène went, though with much repugnance, to get the means to help Rougette, or to be in the position to do so; because it did not seem certain to him that the appeal addressed to the baron would produce the desired result. To run into debt for someone unknown was really an act of great charity on the part of the student; but as Eugène believed in God, every good action was a duty to Him.

The first face he saw on entering was that of his friend Marcel, seated in front of a mirror, a towel round his neck, pretending to be having his hair done. The poor fellow had probably come to procure the wherewithal to pay for his supper of the previous evening; he seemed very preoccupied and frowned with an air of dissatisfaction, whilst the barber, pretending on his part to curl his hair with a cold instrument, talked to him in a subdued Gascon accent. Facing another mirror in a small cabinet, a very restless stranger was seated, also wrapped in a towel, looking ceaselessly round about him, and one saw, through the partly opened door of the back shop, in an old cheval glass, the somewhat thin silhouette of a young woman who,

aided by the wife of the barber, was trying on a dress of Scotch plaid.

"What are you doing here at this hour of the day?" cried Marcel, whose face regained its customary expression of good humour as soon as he recognized his friend.

Eugène sat himself by the mirror and explained in a few words the encounter he had had and the purpose that had brought him here.

"Ma foi!" said Marcel, "you are really sincere? As there is a baron why mix yourself up in it? You saw an interesting young lady apparently in need of food; you bought her a cold chicken, which was worthy of you; there is nothing more to be said. You do not ask any gratitude from her, you are pleased to remain incognito; this is heroic, to go a little further, it is chivalrous. To pledge one's watch or signature for a sempstress kept by a baron, and whom one has not the honour of visiting, has never been done in human memory, except in the Bibliothèque Bleue."

"Laugh at me if you like," said Eugène. "I know that there are many more unfortunates in the world than I can help. Those that I cannot help have my pity; but if I meet one I must help. Whatever I do, it is impossible for me to remain indifferent in the face of suffering. My charity does not go so far as to look for cases, I am not rich enough for that; but when I find a case I give."

"In that event," said Marcel, "you have much to do; you will find no lack of applicants in this country."

"What does it matter?" said Eugène, still moved by the incident of which he had just been a witness; "is it better to let these people die and pass on one's way? That unfortunate girl is scatterbrained, flippant, anything you like to call her; she does not perhaps deserve the compassion which she evokes; but this compassion, I feel it sincerely. Is it better to act like her intimates, who hardly seem to worry about her any more than if she were dead, and who yesterday were only too pleased to lend a hand in her downfall?

"To whom could she turn to help? To a stranger who would light his cigar with her letter, or to Mademoiselle Pinson, I suppose, who is always dining out and going the pace, whilst her friend just—starves? I must say, my dear Marcel, that all that upsets me profoundly. That thoughtless little creature of yesterday evening, with her snatches of song and vulgar jokes, laughing and babbling at your party, at the time when the other, the heroine of her story, is dying in a loft. It makes my heart sick. To live in that way, as friends, almost as sisters, for days and weeks, going the round of theatres, dances, cafés, and not to know from one day to another whether one is dead or the other alive, it is worse than the indifference of the *égoïsts*, it is the indifference of an animal. Your Mademoiselle Pinson is a monster, and your grisettes that you boast about, their shameless manners, their butterfly friendships, I know nothing so contemptible!"

The barber, who, during this discourse had listened in silence, continuing to manipulate his cold tongs over Marcel's head, smiled maliciously as Eugène stopped talking.

In this way, chattering like a magpie, or rather like the barber that he was, when it was a question of something being said with an ulterior motive, taciturn and laconic, like a Spartan, as soon as things were moving, it was his habit always to let his clients speak first before joining in the conversation. The indignation which Eugène expressed in such violent terms nevertheless made him break his habitual silence.

"You are severe, M'sieur," said he, smiling rather boastfully, "I have the honour to *coiffer* Mademoiselle Mimi, and I believe she is a very kind-hearted creature."

"Yes," said Eugène, "excellent, as far as that goes, when it's a question of drinking or smoking!"

"Possibly," retorted the barber, "I do not deny it; these youngsters, they laugh, they sing, they smoke; but they are mostly very good-hearted."

" What are you trying to make out, *père* Cadedis? " asked Marcel. " Not so much tact; come to the point! "

" I'll prove it to you," replied the barber, pointing to the back shop, " that there is there, hanging on a hook, a little black silk dress that you gentlemen doubtless know, if you know the owner, for she does not possess a very extensive wardrobe. Mademoiselle Mimi sent me this dress early this morning; and I presume that, if she has not helped *la petite* Rougette, it is that she herself is not too well off."

" That's a strange thing," said Marcel, rising and going into the back shop, without consideration for the poor girl who was still trying on her tartan dress. " Mimi's song was hardly true to fact, as she had been forced to pawn her frock. But in the devil's name in what does she go visiting now? Isn't she calling on anybody now, then? "

Eugène had followed his friend.

The barber had not deceived them: in a dim corner, mixed up with all sorts and kinds of clothes, Mademoiselle Pinson's only dress was drooping humbly and sadly.

" That's actually it," said Marcel; " I recognize the frock, having seen it when it was quite new, eighteen months ago. It is the working dress, riding habit and afternoon frock of Mademoiselle Mimi. There should be on the left cuff a little stain about the size of a franc, caused by a drop of champagne. And how much have you lent on that, *père* Cadedis? For I suppose that that dress is not sold, and is only to be found in this boudoir as a pledge? "

" I have lent four francs," replied the barber, " and I assure you, M'sieur, that it was pure charity. To any other I would not have advanced more than forty sous; the dress is worn out, one can see through it, the whole thing's transparent. But I know that Mademoiselle Mimi will pay me; she is always good for four francs."

" Poor Mimi! " sighed Marcel; " I'll eat my hat if she's not borrowed this trifling sum to send to Rougette."

" Or to pay some pressing debt," said Eugène.

"No," said Marcel, "I know Mimi; I don't think she'd strip herself for a creditor."

"That may be true," said the barber. "I knew Mademoiselle Mimi in a better position than that in which she now finds herself; she had then a quantity of debts. One arrived daily to seize what she possessed, and one finished, as far as that goes, by taking all her furniture, except her bed, for you gentlemen will doubtless be aware that a debtor's bed cannot be seized. But Mademoiselle Mimi had at this time four very nice dresses. She put all four of them one on top of the other, and she went to bed on top of them so as to prevent their being seized; that is why I was surprised that, not having more than one dress now, she pledged it to pay somebody."

"Poor Mimi," repeated Marcel; "but how does she actually manage? Has she been gulling her friends? Has she got a dress we know nothing about? Has she made herself ill through eating too much sticky cake? As far as that goes, if she is in bed there's no necessity for her to dress. That's no matter, *père* Cadedis, the sight of that dress hurts me, with its dangling cuffs which seem to ask for help; here, take back four francs from the thirty-five livres that you were going to advance me, and wrap up the dress, and I will return it to the poor child. Well, Eugène," he continued, "what does your Christian charity say to that?"

"That you are right," responded Eugène, "to talk and act as you do, but perhaps for my part I am not wrong; I will have a bet on it if you like."

"Right," said Marcel, "let us have a cigar on it, like the members of the Jockey Club. You have nothing more to do here. I have thirty-one francs—we are rich! Let us go and see Mademoiselle Pinson; I am anxious to call on her."

He put the dress under his arm, and the two of them went out of the shop.

VII

"Mademoiselle has gone to Mass," the concierge informed the two students, when they arrived at the lodging of Mademoiselle Pinson.

"To Mass!" exclaimed Eugène in surprise.

"To Mass!" repeated Marcel. "It is impossible, she has not gone out; let us go in; we are old friends."

"I assure you, M'sieur," replied the concierge, "that she has actually gone out to Mass, about three-quarters of an hour ago."

"And which church has she gone to?"

"To St. Sulpice, as she always does; she never misses a day."

"Yes, yes, I know she plays to le bon Dieu; but it seems strange to me that she has gone out to-day."

"Here she is coming back, M'sieur; she is just coming down the street; you can see her for yourself."

In fact Mademoiselle Pinson, having left the church, was returning home.

Marcel had no sooner caught sight of her than he ran towards her, impatient to see her rig-out from close to. She had for a dress a skirt of dark Indian print, partially covered by a green serge curtain; out of which she had contrived a sort of shawl. Her graceful head, set off by a white bonnet, emerged from this singular garb, which owing to its sombre colour passed without comment, and her tiny feet were shod in dainty little boots.

She had draped herself in her curtain with such care and art that it really looked like a genuine old shawl, so that one scarcely saw the bound edge of it. In short, she had found the means of pleasing the eye in this contrivance, and of proving again to the world that a pretty woman is a pretty woman anyhow.

"How do you like me?" she said to the two young men, slightly parting her "curtain," and letting them have a

glimpse of her finely-moulded figure, modelled by her corsets. "It is a morning deshabille that Palmir has just sent me."

"You are charming," said Marcel. "*Ma foi*, I would not have believed that anyone could look so effective in a window curtain!"

"Really," replied Mademoiselle Pinson, "in spite of the fact that I feel rather like a tied-up sachet."

"Sachet of roses," responded Marcel. "I almost regret now having brought you your dress."

"My dress? Where did you find it?"

"Where it was, apparently."

"Then you have liberated it from slavery?"

"Yes, indeed, I have ransomed it. Are you annoyed with me from my temerity?"

"Certainly not, if I may recoup you. I am very pleased indeed to see my dress again; for, to tell you the truth, the two of us have lived together for so long that I have become unconsciously very attached to it."

So speaking Mademoiselle Pinson tripped briskly up the five flights of stairs which led to her little room, which the two friends entered with her.

"I can only return you this dress on one condition," said Marcel.

"How shameful," ejaculated the grisette. "What nonsense! Conditions? I'll have nothing to do with them."

"I have made a bet," said Marcel; "you must tell us frankly why this dress was pawned."

"Let me first of all put it on," replied Mademoiselle Pinson; "I will then give you the reason. But I must warn you that if you will not use my wardrobe, or the gutter, as an antechamber you must cover your face like Agamemnon."

"We can't agree to that, we're better behaved than you think, and wouldn't even steal a glimpse."

"Wait," replied Mademoiselle Pinson. "I have every

confidence in you, but experience tells us that two precautions are better than one."

Saying this she took off her curtain and put it gently over the heads of the two friends, and in such a way as to render them completely blind.

"Don't move," she said to them, "it's only for a second."

"Take care of yourself," said Marcel, "if there's a hole in the curtain I will answer for nothing. You will not be satisfied with our word, consequently it is withdrawn."

"Happily, so is my dress," said Mademoiselle Pinson; "and my figure as well," she added, laughing, and throwing the curtain on the floor. "Poor little dress! It seems to me quite new. It gives me great pleasure to snuggle in it again!"

"And your secret—you will tell it to us now? Listen! The truth! We're not given to gossiping. How and why a young person like you, knowing, experienced, virtuous and modest, could all at once put the whole of her wardrobe in pawn, at one fell swoop."

"Why, why?" replied Mademoiselle Pinson, seeming to hesitate. Then, taking the two young men, each by an arm, she said to them, pushing them towards the door: "Come with me and you shall see."

As Marcel expected, she took them to the rue de l'Éperon.

VIII

Marcel had won his bet. The four francs and Mademoiselle Pinson's piece of cake were on Rougette's table, with the remains of Eugène's chicken.

The poor invalid was a bit better, but still confined to her bed; and whatever her gratitude was towards her unknown benefactor, she made her friend tell these gentlemen that she asked to be excused, but she was not in a condition to receive them.

"How well I know that touch," said Marcel; "she would

die on the straw in an attic, but she would still behave like a duchess in front of her water-jug."

The two friends, with much regret, were then obliged to return home as they had come, not without laughing together at the pride and discretion so strangely manifested in a garret.

After having been to the School of Medicine for their daily lecture they dined together, and the evening having set in they took a turn up and down the boulevard des Italiens. There, still smoking the cigar he had won in the morning:

"With all this," said Marcel, "are you not obliged to admit that I have at heart reason to love and also to esteem these poor creatures? Let us consider temperately these matters from a philosophic point of view. This little Mimi, whom you have abused so, has she not, in depriving herself of her dress, done an action more praiseworthy, more meritorious, I even venture to say more Christian, than the good King Robert in allowing a poor creature to cut a piece off his mantle? The good King Robert, on the one hand, had no doubt plenty of mantles; on the other hand, he was seated at table, said the historian, when a beggar approached him, dragging himself along on hands and knees, and with a pair of scissors cut the gold fringe from his sovereign. This the queen considered was taking a liberty, but the dignified monarch actually pardoned the thief; perhaps he had dined well! Reflect, what a difference between him and Mimi! Mimi, when she had learnt of Rougette's misfortune, was undoubtedly fasting, for you can rest assured that the piece of cake she took away from my supper was destined in advance to form her own breakfast. But, what did she do? Instead of breakfasting, she goes to Mass, and in so doing she shows herself once more the equal of King Robert, who was very pious, I admit it, but who wasted his time singing to the lute whilst the Normans ran wild. King Robert let his friends go hang, and actually

he retained the mantle. Mimi sent her complete wardrobe to *père* Cadedis, an incomparable action in that Mimi is a woman, young, pretty, coquettish and poor; and take special note, that this dress is necessary to her so that she can go as usual to her shop, to earn her daily bread. Not only then does she deprive herself of the piece of cake which she was going to feast on, but she voluntarily puts herself into the position of not being able to dine. Moreover, notice that *père* Cadedis is far from being a beggar, and dragging himself on all fours under the table. King Robert, giving up his fringe, did not make any great sacrifice, because it was cut off before he noticed it. It is not known whether this fringe was cut across or not, and if it was possible to mend it; whilst Mimi, voluntarily, far from expecting that she would have her dress stolen, herself tears this covering from her poor body, more precious, more useful than the tinsel of all the lace-makers in Paris. She goes out draped in a curtain; but rest assured that she would not have gone out in this garb to any other place than the church. She would sooner have an arm cut off than show herself arrayed in a bundle of rags at the Luxembourg or the Tuileries; but she dares to show herself to God, because it is the time for her daily prayer. Believe me, Eugène, there is more courage and real religion in Mimi crossing in her curtain the place St. Michel, rue de Tournon and rue de Petit Lion, where she is known to everybody, than in all the hymns of good King Robert, of which all the world talked, from the fat Bossuet to the thin Anquetil, whereas Mimi will die unknown in her fifth storey between a pot of flowers and a half-finished dress."

"All the better for her," said Eugène.

"If I wished," resumed Marcel, "to continue to make comparisons, I could draw you a parallel between Mucius Scævola and Rougette. Do you believe, as far as that goes, that it would be more difficult for a Roman of the time of Tarquin to keep his arm for five minutes over a lighted

fire than for a present-day grisette to go without food for twenty-four hours? Neither one nor the other made any plaint, but look into their reasons. Mucius was in the middle of a camp, in the presence of an Etruscan king whom he had tried to assassinate; he failed lamentably, he was in the hands of the soldiery. What was going through his mind? Bravado? So that he should be admired before he was hanged? He burnt his fingers with a brand, but it has not been proved that the brazier was really hot, nor that the finger was incinerated. Upon which, the dignified Porsenna, astounded by this high-flown gesture, pardoned him and sent him home. It is debatable if the said Porsenna, capable of such generosity, cut a good figure, and whether Scævola had reason to suppose that in sacrificing his arm he would save his head. Rougette, on the contrary, endures patiently the most horrible, the most tedious of tortures, that of hunger; no one was taking any notice of her. She is alone in the corner of a garret, she has neither Porsenna to admire her, that is to say the baron, nor the Romans, that is to say the neighbours, nor the Etruscans, that is to say her creditors, nor even the brazier, for her stove was out. But why did she suffer without complaint? First, from vanity, that is certain; but the case of Mucius was the same; from nobility of soul, then, and that constitutes her glory; for if she remained quiet behind her locked door it is precisely in order that her friends should not know she was dying, so that she should be spared the humiliation of pity, so that her friend Pinson, whom she knew to be kind-hearted and thoroughly devoted, should not be obliged, as she had done previously, to give her her dress and her food. Mucius, in Rougette's place, would have pretended to die in silence, but that would have been at the cross-roads or some other public place. His taciturn and sublime vanity would have found a delicate way of hinting for a glass of wine and a crust. It is true Rougette asked the baron, whom I insist on comparing with Porsenna, for a louis, but you must realize

that the baron was really indebted to Rougette for many kindnesses. That is clear to the least observant. As you have, moreover, wisely remarked, it was possible that the baron was in the country, and if this were so Rougette was lost. And do not think that you can confound me with the usual platitude with which one refers to all the good deeds of women, that they do not know what they are doing, and that they run towards danger as cats make for the tiles. Rougette knows what death means; she has seen it at first hand on the pont d'Jena, for she has already thrown herself in the water once, and I asked her if she had suffered. She said 'No, that she had felt nothing, except at the moment when she was hauled out, for the boatmen had dragged her by the legs, and they had, so she said, grazed her head on the side of the boat.'"

"Enough!" said Eugène, "spare me your gruesome pleasantries. Answer me seriously: do you believe that such horrible instances, often repeated, always menacing, can eventually have any good result? These poor girls, living alone, with nothing behind them, without advice, have they enough native good sense to counterbalance their lack of experience? Is there a familiar spirit in attendance on them, who condemns them always to ill-luck and misfortune, but, in spite of such vagaries can they return to better things? Here is one who prays to God, you say; she goes to church, performs her devotions, lives honestly by her work; her friends appear to hold her in esteem; and you other blackguards, you do not treat her yourselves with your usual thoughtlessness. Here is another who goes from one blunder to another, from prodigality to the pangs of hunger. Indeed, she will always have in mind the cruel lessons she has learned. Do you believe that with wise counsel, regular habits, a little help, one could make such women into reasonable beings? If there are any such, tell me. An opportunity is presented to us; let us make our way to poor Rougette; she is doubtless still suffering a

great deal, and her friend watches by her bedside. Do not discourage me, let me take action; I would like to guide them back to the straight path, to speak to them in all sincerity; I do not wish to preach to or reproach them. I want to go to them, take their hands, and say to them . . ."

At this moment the two friends passed in front of the café Tortoni. The silhouettes of the two young women, who were eating ices in front of a window, were thrown up by the bright lights. One of them waved her handkerchief and the other one burst out laughing.

"By jingo," exclaimed Marcel, "if you wish to speak to them, we've only to cross the road, for there they are, God bless me! I recognize Mimi by her dress, and Rougette by her white feather, always to be found where there is something good to eat! It appears that M'sieur le baron has done his part handsomely!"

* * * * * *

"Does not such irresponsibility frighten you?" said Eugène.

"Undoubtedly," replied Marcel; "but I beg of you when you speak disparagingly of grisettes make an exception of the little Pinson. She recited to us the history of a supper, she pawned her dress for four francs, she made herself a mantle out of a curtain; and who says what he knows, who gives what he has, who does what he can, is not called upon to do more."

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

(1811–1872)

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THE NEST OF NIGHTINGALES

(Translated by GEORGE BURNHAM IVES)

ABOUT the château there was a beautiful park.

In the park there were birds of all kinds; nightingales, blackbirds and linnets; all the birds of earth had made a rendezvous of the park.

In the spring there was such an uproar that one could not hear one's self talk; every leaf concealed a nest, every tree was an orchestra. All the little feathered musicians vied with one another in melodious contest. Some chirped, others cooed; some performed trills and pearly cadences, others executed bravura passages and elaborate flourishes; genuine musicians could not have done so well.

But in the château there were two fair cousins who sang better than all the birds in the park; Fleurette was the name of one, and Isabeau that of the other. Both were lovely, alluring, and in good case; and on Sundays, when they wore their fine clothes, if their white shoulders had not proved that they were real maidens, one might have taken them for angels; they lacked only wings. When they sang, old Sire de Maulevrier, their uncle, sometimes held their hands, for fear that they might take it into their heads to fly away.

I leave you to imagine the gallant lance-thrusts that were exchanged at tournaments and *carrousels* in honour of Fleurette and Isabeau. Their reputation for beauty and talent had made the circuit of Europe, and yet they were none the prouder for it; they lived in retirement, seeing

almost nobody save the little page Valentin, a pretty, fair-haired child, and Sire de Maulevrier, a hoary-headed old man, all tanned by the sun, and worn out by having borne his war-harness sixty years.

They passed their time in tossing seeds to the little birds, in saying their prayers, and, above all, in studying the works of the masters and in rehearsing together some motet, madrigal, villanelle, or other music of the sort; they also had flowers which they themselves watered and tended. Their life passed in these pleasant and poetical maidenly occupations; they remained in the château, far from the eyes of the world, and yet the world busied itself about them. Neither the nightingale nor the rose can conceal itself; their melody and their perfume always betray them. Now, our two cousins were at once nightingales and roses.

There came dukes and princes to solicit their hands in marriage; the Emperor of Trebizond and the Sultan of Egypt sent ambassadors to propose an alliance to Sire de Maulevrier; the two cousins were not weary of being maidens and would not listen to any mention of the subject. Perhaps a secret instinct had informed them that their mission here on earth was to remain maidens and to sing, and that they would lower themselves by doing anything else.

They had come to that manor when they were very small. The window of their bedroom looked upon the park, and they had been lulled to sleep by the singing of the birds. When they could scarcely walk, old Blondiau, the old lord's minstrel, had placed their tiny hands on the ivory keys of the virginal; they had possessed no other toy and had learned to sing before they had learned to speak; they sang as others breathed; it was natural to them.

This sort of education had had a peculiar influence on their characters. Their melodious childhood had separated them from the ordinary boisterous and chattering one. They had never uttered a shriek or a discordant wail; they

wept in rhythm and wailed in tune. The musical sense, developed in them at the expense of the other senses, made them quite insusceptible to anything that was not music. They lived in melodious space, and had almost no perception of the real world otherwise than by musical notes. They understood wonderfully the rustling of the foliage, the murmur of streams, the striking of the clock, the sigh of the wind in the fire-place, the hum of the spinning-wheel, the dropping of the rain on the shivering grass, all varieties of harmony, without or within; but they did not feel, I am bound to say, great enthusiasm at the sight of a sunset, and they were as little capable of appreciating a painting as if their lovely blue and black eyes had been covered with a thick film. They had the music sickness; they dreamed of it, it deprived them of their appetite; they loved nothing else in the whole world. But, yes, they did love something else—Valentin and their flowers; Valentin because he resembled the roses, the roses because they resembled Valentin. But that love was altogether in the background. To be sure, Valentin was but thirteen years of age. Their greatest pleasure was to sing at their window in the evening the music which they had composed during the day.

The most celebrated masters came from long distances to hear them and to contend with them. The visitors had no sooner listened to one measure than they broke their instruments and tore up their scores, confessing themselves vanquished. In very truth, the music was so pleasant to the ear and so melodious, that the cherubim from heaven came to the window with the other musicians, and learned it by heart to sing to the good Lord.

One evening in May the two cousins were singing a motet for two voices; never was a lovelier air more beautifully composed and executed. A nightingale in the park, perched upon a rose-bush, listened attentively to them. When they had finished, he flew to the window, and said to them, in nightingale language:

"I would like to compete in song with you."

The two cousins replied that they would do it willingly, and that he might begin.

The nightingale began. He was a master among nightingales. His little throat swelled, his wings fluttered, his whole body trembled; he poured forth roulades, flourishes, arpeggios, and chromatic scales; he ascended and descended; he sang notes and trills with discouraging purity; one would have said that his voice, like his body, had wings. He paused, well assured that he had won the victory.

The two cousins performed in their turn; they surpassed themselves. The song of the nightingale, compared with theirs, seemed like the chirping of a sparrow.

The vanquished virtuoso made a last attempt; he sang a love romanza, then he executed a brilliant flourish, which he crowned by a shower of high, vibrating, and shrill notes, beyond the range of any human voice.

The two cousins, undeterred by that wonderful performance, turned the leaves of their book of music, and answered the nightingale in such wise that Saint Cecilia, who listened in heaven, turned pale with jealousy and let her viol fall to earth.

The nightingale tried again to sing, but the contest had utterly exhausted him; his breath failed him, his feathers drooped, his eyes closed, despite his efforts; he was at the point of death.

"You sang better than I," he said to the two cousins, "and my pride, by making me try to surpass you, has cost me my life. I ask one favour at your hands: I have a nest; in that nest there are three little ones; it is on the third eglantine in the broad avenue beside the pond; send someone to fetch them to you, bring them up and teach them to sing as you do, for I am dying."

Having spoken, the nightingale died. The two cousins wept bitterly for him, for he had sung well. They called Valentin, the fair-haired little page, and told him where

the nest was. Valentin, who was a shrewd little rascal, readily found the place; he put the nest in his breast and carried it to the château without harm. Fleurette and Isabeau, leaning on the balcony rail, were awaiting him impatiently. Valentin soon arrived, holding the nest in his hands. The three little ones had their heads over the edge, with their beaks wide open. The girls were moved to pity by the little orphans, and fed them each in turn. When they had grown a little they began their musical education, as they had promised the vanquished nightingale.

It was wonderful to see how tame they became, how well they sang. They went fluttering about the room, and perched now upon Isabeau's head, now upon Fleurette's shoulder. They lighted in front of the music-book, and in very truth one would have said that they were able to read the notes, with such an intelligent air did they scan the white ones and the black ones. They learned all Fleurette's and Isabeau's melodies, and began to improvise some very pretty ones themselves.

The two cousins lived more and more in solitude, and at night strains of supernal melody were heard to issue from their chamber. The nightingales, perfectly taught, took their parts in the concert, and they sang almost as well as their mistresses, who themselves had made great progress.

Their voices assumed each day extraordinary brilliancy, and vibrated in metallic and crystalline tones far above the register of the natural voice. The young women grew perceptibly thin; their lovely colouring faded; they became as pale as agates and almost as transparent. Sire de Maulevrier tried to prevent their singing, but he could not prevail upon them.

As soon as they had sung a measure or two, a little red spot appeared upon their cheek-bones, and grew larger and larger until they had finished; then the spot disappeared, but a cold sweat issued from their skin, and their lips trembled as if they had a fever.

But their singing was more beautiful than ever; there was in it a something not of this world, and to one who heard those sonorous and powerful voices issuing from those two fragile maidens, it was not difficult to foresee what would happen—that the music would shatter the instrument.

They realized it themselves, and returned to their virginal, which they had abandoned for vocal music. But one night, the window was open, the birds were twittering in the park, the night wind sighed harmoniously; there was so much music in the air that they could not resist the temptation to sing a duet which they had composed the night before.

It was the *Swan's Song*, a wondrous melody all drenched with tears, ascending to the most inaccessible heights of the scale, and redescending the ladder of notes to the lowest round; something dazzling and incredible; a deluge of trills, a fiery rain of chromatic flourishes, a display of musical fireworks impossible to describe; but meanwhile the little red spot grew rapidly larger and almost covered their cheeks. The three nightingales watched them and listened to them with painful anxiety; they flapped their wings, they went and came and could not remain in one place. At last the maidens reached the last bar of the duet; their voices assumed a sonority so extraordinary that it was easy to understand that they who sang were no longer living creatures. The nightingales had taken flight. The two cousins were dead; their souls had departed with the last note. The nightingales had ascended straight to heaven to carry that last song to the good Lord, who kept them all in His Paradise, to perform the music of the two cousins for Him.

Later, with these three nightingales, the good Lord made the souls of Palestrina, of Cimarosa, and of Gluck.

1833.

GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

(1821–1880)

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(I)

THE LEGEND OF SAINT JULIAN THE HOSPITALLER

(Translated by M. D. Honey, M.A.)

I

Julian's father and mother dwelt in a castle in the middle of the woods, on the slope of a hill.

The four towers at the corners had pointed roofs covered with plates of lead, and the base of the walls was supported on the blocks of rock, which sloped down steeply to the bottom of the moat.

The pavement of the courtyard was as spotless as the flagstones of a church. Long gutter-pipes, in the shape of dragons with drooping jaws, spouted out the rain-water towards the tank, and on the window-sills, on every storey, in painted clay pots, bloomed sweet basil or heliotrope.

A second enclosure, formed by palings, included first an orchard of fruit trees, then a garden-plot, with arrangements of flowers forming monograms, then an arbour with bowers in which to take the air, and a mall used for the pages' recreation. On the other side were the kennels, stables, bakehouse, wine-press, and barns. All round stretched a green, grassy pasture, itself inclosed by a strong thorn hedge.

Things had been peaceful for so long that the portcullis was no longer in working order; the moats were full of water; swallows built their nests in the crevices of the battlements; and the archer who paced the curtain-wall all

day long used to retire into the watch tower directly the sun got too strong, and sleep like a monk.

Inside, the iron-work everywhere gleamed; the rooms were protected against the cold by tapestries; and the cupboards overflowed with linen, butts of wine were piled in the cellars, oak chests creaked under the weight of sacks of money.

In the armoury, between standards and heads of wild animals, were to be seen weapons of every age and every nation, from Amalekite slings and Garamantian javelins to Saracen broadswords and Norman coats of mail.

The main spit in the kitchen was capable of turning an ox; the chapel was sumptuous as a king's oratory. There was even, in a retired corner, a vapour-bath in the Roman style; but the noble lord denied himself the use of it, deeming it an idolatrous practice.

Wrapped always in a fox-skin robe, he would wander about his house, administer justice to his vassals, settle his neighbours' quarrels. In winter he would watch the snowflakes falling, or have stories read to him. As soon as the first fine days came, he would set off on his mule along the lanes, by the edge of the springing corn, and would talk with the rustics and give them his advice. After many adventures he had taken to wife a maiden of high degree.

She was very fair, somewhat proud and sedate. The horns of her head-dress touched the lintels of the doorways; the train of her cloth dress trailed three feet behind her. Her household was ordered like a monastic establishment; every morning she dealt out their duties to her maid-servants, saw to her preserves and salves, spun at her distaff or embroidered altar-cloths. In answer to her constant prayers a son was born to her.

Then there were great rejoicings, and a feast which lasted three days and four nights, by the light of torches, to the sound of harps, on thick-strewn leafage. The rarest spices were eaten, and fowls big as sheep; for amusement, a

dwarf came out of a pasty; and, the supply of bowls becoming inadequate, for the crowd was continually increasing, it became necessary to drink from horns and from helmets.

The newly-confined mother was not present at these festivities. She remained in her bed, quietly. One evening she awoke, and saw in a moonbeam which entered by the window what looked like a moving shadow. It was an old man in a homespun gown, with a string of beads at his side, a wallet on his shoulder, looking altogether like a hermit. He drew near her bedside and said, without opening his lips:

"Rejoice, O mother! thy son shall be a saint!"

She was about to cry out; but, gliding along the moonbeam, he rose gently into the air and disappeared. The songs of the banquet broke forth more loudly. She heard the voices of angels, and her head sank back on the pillow, above which stood, set aloft, the bone of a martyr in a frame of carbuncles.

Next day all the servants, when questioned, declared that they had seen no hermit. Whether a dream or real, the thing must have been a communication from heaven; but she was careful to say nothing about it, fearing to be accused of vainglorіousness.

The guests departed at break of day; and Julian's father was standing outside the postern gate, where he had just seen out the last of them, when suddenly a beggar rose up before him in the mist. He was a Bohemian with plaited beard, silver bracelets on both arms, and burning eyes. He stammered out with an inspired air these incoherent words:

"Ah! ah! your son! . . . much blood! . . . much glory! . . . ever happy! an emperor's family."

And stooping down to pick up his alms, he was lost to sight in the grass, and vanished.

The good lord of the castle looked to the right and to the left, and called with all his might. There was

no one. The wind whistled, the morning mists drifted away.

He attributed this vision to the fact that his head was tired from having had too little sleep. "If I speak of it, I shall be laughed at," said he to himself. Nevertheless he was dazzled by the splendours destined for his son, although the promise was not a clear one, and he was even doubtful whether he had heard it.

The husband and wife hid their secret from each other. But both doted on the child with equal love; and respecting him as marked out by God, they surrounded his person with infinite attentions. His couch was padded with the finest down; a lamp in the shape of a dove burned continually above it; three nurses rocked his cradle; and, snugly wrapped in his swaddling clothes, with his pink cheeks and blue eyes, his robe of brocade and cap loaded with pearls, he looked like a little child Jesus. He got his teeth without crying once.

When he was seven years old his mother taught him to sing. To make him brave his father hoisted him up on to a great horse. The child smiled with glee, and was not long before he knew everything about a charger.

A very learned old monk taught him Holy Scripture, Arabic numeration and Latin, and how to make dainty paintings on vellum. They used to work together, at the very top of a turret, out of the way of noise.

When the lesson was over, they would go down into the garden, where, moving along step by step, they would study the flowers.

Sometimes there would be seen wending its way along the valley bottom a string of pack-horses, led by a man on foot, in Eastern garb. The lord of the castle, having recognized him as a merchant, would send a servant off to him. The stranger, taking heart, would turn aside from his path; and when brought to the parlour would draw forth from his coffers pieces of velvet and silk, goldsmiths' wares,

aromatic perfumes, strange things whose uses were unknown; in the end the fellow would go off with much profit, and having suffered no violence.

Another time, a band of pilgrims would knock at the gate. Their wet clothes would smoke in front of the hearth; and when they had eaten their fill, they would tell the story of their travels: the roving of the ships over the foaming sea, the journeys afoot in the burning desert sands, the fierceness of the paynims, the caves of Syria, the Manger and the Sepulchre. Then they would give the young lord shells off their cloaks.

Often the lord of the castle would feast his old comrades in arms. While they drank they would recall their wars, the assaults on fortresses with the battering of engines and stupendous wounds. Julian, listening to them, would shout aloud; then his father had no doubt that he would later on be a conqueror. But at evening, coming out from Angelus, when he passed between the poor waiting with bowed heads, he would dip into his purse with such modesty and such an air of nobility that his mother was sure she would eventually see him an archbishop.

His place in the chapel was at his parents' side; and however long the services were, he would remain on his knees on his prayer-stool, his cap on the floor and his hands folded.

One day, during Mass, he saw as he raised his head a little white mouse coming out of a hole in the wall. It ran along the first step of the altar, and after two or three excursions to right and left, ran back the same way. The next Sunday the thought that he might see it again disturbed him. It did come again; and every Sunday he waited for it, was irritated by it, conceived an aversion for it, and determined to get rid of it.

So, having shut the door and strewed crumbs of cake on the steps, he took up his stand before the hole with a wand in his hand.

At the end of a very long time a pink nose appeared, and then the whole mouse. He gave it a tap, and stood aghast at the sight of the tiny body which had ceased to move. A drop of blood stained the pavement. He wiped it away hastily with his sleeve, threw the mouse out, and said nothing about it to anyone.

All sorts of little birds used to pick up the seeds in the garden. He conceived the idea of putting peas in a hollow reed. When he heard twittering in a tree, he would draw near softly, then raise his tube, puff out his cheeks, and the little creatures showered down on his shoulders so plentifully that he could not help laughing, pleased by his malicious trick.

One morning, as he was coming back by the curtain-wall, he saw on the ridge of the rampart a big pigeon preening itself in the sun. Julian stopped to look at it; the wall having a breach in it at that point, a chip of stone happened to be lying under his hand. He swung his arm, and the stone knocked down the bird, which fell plump into the moat.

He hurried to the bottom, tearing himself on the bushes, ferreting about more nimbly than a puppy.

The pigeon, with its wings broken, was still quivering, caught in the branches of a privet.

The persistency of its life irritated the boy. He set about strangling it; and the bird's convulsive struggles made his heart beat, and filled him with a savage, tumultuous delight. When it finally stiffened, he felt himself swooning.

That evening, during supper, his father declared that a boy of his age ought to learn venery; and he went and fetched an old manuscript book containing in questions and answers the whole pastime of the chase. In it a master demonstrated to his pupil the art of training dogs and reclaiming hawks, and of setting traps, how to recognize the stag by his fumet, the fox by his tracks, the wolf by his scratches, the best way of distinguishing their trails, how

they are started, where their hiding-places are usually to be found, which are the most favourable winds, together with a list of the cries and the rules of the quarry.

When Julian was able to recite all these things by heart his father formed a pack for him.

In it there were to be found first twenty-four Barbary greyhounds, swifter than gazelles, but apt to run away; next seventeen couples of Breton dogs, red flecked with white, unshakable in their obedience to control, deep-chested and loud baying. For attacks on boars, with their perilous doublings, there were forty griffons, as shaggy as bears. There were Tartary mastiffs, almost as big as donkeys, flame-coloured, broad backed and straight-legged, designed for the pursuit of the aurochs. The black coats of the spaniels shone like satin, the yapping of the Talbots vied with the music of the beagles.

In a yard apart, rattling their chains and rolling their eyes, growled eight Alans, formidable beasts which fly at a rider's belly and are not afraid of lions.

All of them were fed on wheaten bread, drank out of stone troughs, and bore high-sounding names.

The falconry perhaps surpassed the pack; the noble lord, at great expense, had procured tiercels from the Caucasus, Babylonian sakers, German gerfalcons, and peregrine falcons captured on the cliffs bordering the chill seas in distant lands. They were lodged in a thatched outhouse, and, chained to the perch in order of size, had a grass sod before them, on which they were set down from time to time to get rid of their stiffness.

Bag-nets, fish-hooks, traps, snares of all kinds were constructed.

Often they would go out into the country with fowling-dogs, which would quickly make a point. Then prickers advancing step by step, would cautiously spread an immense net over their impassive forms. They barked at a word of command; quails took wing; and the ladies of the neigh-

bourhood, invited with their husbands, the children, the waiting-women, all would fling themselves upon them and catch them easily.

At other times drums would be beaten to start hares; foxes fell into pits, or a spring, uncoiling, would catch a wolf by the paw.

But Julian despised these easy contrivances; he preferred hunting far from anyone, with his horse and his hawk. This was nearly always a big Scythian tartaret, as white as snow. Its leather hood was surmounted by a plume, little golden bells quivered on its blue legs: and it sat steady on its master's arm while his horse galloped and the plains unfolded before him. Julian, slipping its jesses, would fly it suddenly; the fearless creature would rise straight as an arrow into the air; and two unequal specks would be seen turning, meeting, and disappearing in the depths of the blue. The hawk would not be long before it came down tearing a bird, and would return to settle on the gauntlet, with quivering wings.

Julian flew in this manner herons, kites, crows and vultures.

He loved to sound his horn and follow his dogs as they coursed along the hill-sides, leaped streams, and turned up again toward the woods; and when the stag began to moan under their bites he would fell it swiftly, and then delight in the fury of the mastiffs as they devoured it, cut in pieces upon its smoking hide.

On misty days he would go deep into a marsh to lie in wait for geese, otters, and young wild duck.

Three squires would be waiting for him at the foot of the steps at earliest dawn; and the old monk, leaning out of his dormer window, would in vain signal to call him back; Julian did not turn round. He would go in the heat of the sun, in the rain, through the storm, drinking spring water from the hollow of his hand, eating wild apples as he ambled along, resting if he was weary under

an oak; and he would come home in the middle of the night, covered with blood and mud, with prickles in his hair and smelling of wild animals. He grew like them. When his mother kissed him, he accepted her embrace coldly, and seemed to be musing upon deep matters.

He killed bears with a knife, bulls with an axe, boars with a spear; once even, having nothing but a stick left, he protected himself against wolves which were gnawing corpses at the foot of a gallows.

One winter morning he set off before daylight, well equipped, a crossbow on his shoulder and a bundle of arrows at his saddle-bow.

His Danish jennet, followed by two terriers, stepped out at an even pace, its hoofs ringing on the ground. Drops of rime clung to his cloak, a violent wind was blowing. One side of the horizon cleared; and in the white light of dawn he saw some rabbits frisking at the mouth of their holes. The two terriers immediately dashed at them; and, now here, now there, swiftly broke their backs.

Soon he entered a wood. On the end of a branch a blackcock, benumbed by the cold, was asleep with its head under its wing. Julian, with a backward sweep of his sword, sliced off its feet, and without picking it up went on his way.

Three hours later he found himself on the peak of a mountain so high that the sky seemed almost black. Before him a rock like a long wall fell away, overhanging a precipice; and at the extreme end, two wild goats were looking down into the chasm. As he had not his arrows (for his horse was left behind), he took it into his head to go down to where they were; bent half double, barefoot, he at length reached the first goat, and drove his dagger home under its ribs. The second, terror-stricken, leapt into the void. Julian sprang forward to strike it, and, his right foot slipping, he fell on the corpse of the other, his head over the chasm and his arms outspread.

When he had come down to the plain again, he followed the line of some willows on the bank of a river. Cranes, flying very low, passed over his head from time to time. Julian knocked them down with his whip and did not miss one.

Meanwhile the warmer air had melted the hoar frost, broad patches of mist were rising, and the sun came out. He saw, gleaming far in the distance, a frozen lake, looking like lead. In the middle of the lake was an animal which Julian did not know, a black-nosed beaver. In spite of the distance an arrow brought it down; and he was vexed at not being able to carry off the skin.

Then he went on into an avenue of tall trees, their tops forming, as it were, a triumphal arch, at the entrance to a forest. A roe bounded out from a thicket, a buck appeared at a cross-roads, a badger came out of a hole, a peacock on the grass spread its tail;—and when he had slain them all, more roes presented themselves, more bucks, more badgers, more peaocks, and blackbirds, jays, polecats, foxes, hedgehogs, lynxes, an infinitude of animals, more numerous at every step.

They circled round him, trembling, with gentle, supplicating glances. But Julian did not weary of killing, by turns bending his crossbow, unsheathing his sword, thrusting with his cutlass, and he had no thought for anything, no recollection of anything whatsoever. He had been hunting in some indeterminate place, for an indefinite time, by the mere fact of his own existence, everything happening with the facility experienced in dreams. An extraordinary sight arrested him. A circus-shaped valley was filled with stags; and, crowded close together, they were warming each other with their breath, which could be seen smoking in the mist.

The hope of such carnage as that suffocated him with joy for some minutes. Then he dismounted, turned up his sleeves, and began to shoot.

At the whistle of the first arrow all the stags turned their

heads at the same moment. Gaps appeared in the mass; plaintive cries arose, and a great tremor passed through the herd.

The lip of the valley was too high to cross. They bounded about the enclosure, seeking to escape. Julian aimed and shot; and the arrows fell like the streaks of rain in a storm. The maddened stags fought, reared, climbed on each other's backs; and their bodies, with their antlers entangled, formed a great mound, crumbling and shifting.

At length they died, lying on the sand with slavering muzzles, disembowelled, the heaving of their bellies growing less and less by degrees. Then all was still.

Night was drawing on; and behind the wood, through the spaces between the branches, the sky showed red like a sheet of blood.

Julian leant his back against a tree. He gazed wide-eyed at the vastness of the slaughter, not understanding how he had been able to do it.

On the other side of the valley, on the edge of the forest, he caught sight of a stag, a doe, and its fawn.

The stag, which was black and of huge size, had sixteen points and a white beard. The doe, as light in colour as dead leaves, was cropping the grass; and the dappled fawn, without impeding her movements, was feeding at her udder.

The crossbow hummed once more. The fawn was killed on the spot. Then the mother, looking up to the sky, gave a deep, heart-rending, human bellow. Julian, exasperated, laid her low on the ground with a shot full in the breast.

The great stag had seen him and gave a bound. Julian shot his last arrow at him. It struck him on the forehead, and remained planted there.

The great stag did not appear to feel it; stepping over the dead bodies, it came on, ready to rush at him and disembowel him; and Julian retreated in unspeakable dread. The monstrous beast stopped; and with flaming eyes,

solemn as a patriarch or a justiciary, a bell tinkling in the distance meanwhile, he repeated thrice:

"Accursed! accursed! accursed! One day, thou savage heart, thou shalt slay thy father and mother!"

His knees gave under him, his eyes closed gently, and he died.

Julian was dumbfounded, and then, overcome by sudden weariness, a feeling of disgust and vast sadness stole over him. His head in his hands, he wept long.

His horse was lost; his dogs had forsaken him; the solitude which enfolded him seemed menacing, full of vague perils. Then, impelled by a sudden terror, he set off across country, chose a path at random, and found himself almost at once at the castle gate.

That night he did not sleep. In the wavering light of the hanging lamp he kept on seeing the great black stag again. Its prophecy obsessed him; he struggled against it. "No! no! no! I cannot kill them!" Then he mused: "And yet, supposing I should want to? . . ." and he was afraid lest the devil should inspire him with the desire to do it.

Throughout three months his mother in anguish prayed at his bedside, and his father walked ceaselessly up and down the passages, groaning. He summoned the most famous master-leeches, who prescribed quantities of drugs. Julian's sickness, they said, was caused by some baleful wind, or an amorous lust. But, in answer to all questions, the youth shook his head.

His strength returned; and he was taken out to walk in the courtyard, the old monk and the noble lord each supporting him with an arm.

When he was completely restored, he persistently refused to go hunting.

His father, wishing to cheer him, made him a present of a great Saracen sword.

It was at the top of a pillar, in a panoply. To reach it a

ladder was required. Julian went up it. The sword was too heavy, and slipped from his fingers, and, as it fell, grazed so closely past the noble lord that his surcoat was cut by it; Julian thought he had killed his father, and swooned.

From that time on, he had a dread of weapons. The sight of a naked sword turned him pale. This weakness was a great grief to his family.

At length the old monk commanded him, in the name of God, his honour, and his forbears, to resume a nobleman's pursuits.

The squires used every day to amuse themselves with javelin play. Julian quickly excelled in this. He could throw his into the neck of a bottle, break the pointers of a weather-vane, hit the nails in a door at a hundred paces.

One summing evening, at the hour when mist makes things indistinct, he was in the arbour in the garden, and suddenly saw, right at the farther end, two white wings fluttering on a level with the espalier. He never doubted that it was a stork; and he threw his javelin.

A heart-rending cry arose.

It was his mother, whose cap with its long lappets was left pinned to the wall.

Julian fled from the castle, and never appeared again.

II

He enlisted in a passing band of adventurers.

He experienced hunger and thirst, fevers and vermin. He grew accustomed to the din of affrays and the sight of dying men. The wind tanned his skin. His limbs were hardened by contact with armour; and as he was very strong, brave, sober and circumspect, he gained command of a company without difficulty.

At the outset of battles he would stir up his soldiers with a great wave of his sword. With a knotted rope he would climb the walls of citadels by night, rocked by the storm-

wind, while the burning flakes from the Greek fire adhered to his cuirass, and boiling pitch and molten lead poured down from the battlements. Often his buckler was shattered by the crash of a stone. Bridges overladen with men gave way under him. Whirling his battle-mace, he rid himself of fourteen horsemen. He overthrew in the lists all who came forward. More than twenty times he was believed dead.

Thanks to divine favour, he always came out safely, for he protected churchmen, orphans, widows, and especially old men. When he saw one walking before him, he would call out, in order to see his face, as if he had been afraid of killing him by mistake.

Fugitive slaves, peasants in revolt, portionless bastards, dauntless fellows of all kinds flocked to his banner, and he formed an army.

It grew. He became famous and sought after.

One after the other he succoured the Dauphin of France, the King of England, the Templars at Jerusalem, the Surena of the Parthians, the Negus of Abyssinia, and the Emperor of Calicut. He fought Scandinavians covered all over with fish-scales, negroes armed with round shields of hippopotamus hide and mounted on red asses, gold-coloured Indians brandishing above their head-bands great sabres brighter than mirrors. He defeated the Troglodytes and the Anthropophagi. He traversed regions so torrid that in the burning heat of the sun the hair caught fire of itself, like a torch; and others so glacial that the arms became detached from the body and fell to the ground; and lands where there were so many fogs that men walked surrounded by phantoms.

Republics in difficulties consulted him. At ambassadors' conferences he obtained unhoped-for conditions. If a monarch conducted himself too ill, he would arrive suddenly and remonstrate with him. He freed nations. He delivered queens imprisoned in towers. It was he, and none else,

who struck down the Viper of Milan and the Dragon of Oberbirbach.

Now the Emperor of Occitania, triumphant over the Spanish Moslems, had taken as a concubine the sister of the Caliph of Cordova, and he had a daughter by her, whom he had brought up in Christian wise. But the Caliph, feigning a desire to be converted, came to visit him, accompanied by a numerous escort, massacred his whole garrison, and threw him into the deepest dungeon, where he treated him harshly, so as to extort treasures from him.

Julian hastened to his aid, destroyed the infidel army, besieged the town, killed the Caliph, cut off his head, and tossed it like a ball over the ramparts. Then he brought the Emperor forth from his prison, and set him on his throne again in presence of his whole court.

The Emperor, as the price of so great a service, presented to him, in baskets, great sums of money. Julian would have none of it. Thinking he wanted more, he offered him three-fourths of his wealth; he met with another refusal; then to share his kingdom; Julian thanked him and declined; and the Emperor was weeping with vexation, not knowing how to show his gratitude, when he clapped his hand to his brow, said a word in a courtier's ear; the curtains in some tapestry hangings were raised, and a maiden appeared.

Her great black eyes shone like two very soft lamps. A charming smile parted her lips. Her ringlets were caught among the precious stones in her open-necked gown, and her diaphanous tunic hinted at the youthful lines of her form. She was all dainty and dimpled, and slender waisted.

Julian fell blindly in love, all the more because he had up till then led a life of great chastity.

So he received the Emperor's daughter in marriage, and with her a castle which she inherited from her mother; and the wedding over, the farewells were made, after endless compliments on both sides.

It was a white marble palace, built in the Moorish style, on a promontory in an orange grove. Terraces of flowers fell away to the edge of a cove where pink shells crunched under foot. Behind the castle stretched a forest in the pattern of a fan. The sky was eternally blue, and the trees bowed now before the sea breeze and now before the wind from the mountains which bounded the horizon in the distance.

The rooms, full of dusky shadows, were lighted up by the inlaid work on the walls. Tall columns as slender as reeds supported the arched cupolas, ornamented with reliefs in imitation of the stalactites in grottoes.

There were fountains in the halls, mosaics in the court-yards, festooned partitions, innumerable refinements of architecture, and everywhere such silence that one heard the rustle of a scarf or the echo of a sigh.

Julian went to war no longer. He rested, in the midst of a people at peace; and every day a crowd passed before him, bending the knee and kissing hands in the Eastern fashion.

Clad in purple, he would linger leaning on his elbow in the recess of a window, calling to mind his old hunting days; and he would fain have been speeding over the desert after the gazelles and ostriches, hiding among the bamboos in wait for leopards, going through forests full of rhinoceros, or climbing to the top of the most inaccessible mountains to get a better aim at the eagles, and on blocks of ice in the sea fighting the polar bears.

Sometimes, in a dream, he would see himself, like Father Adam, in the midst of Paradise, among all the animals; by stretching out his arm he would cause them to die; or else they would file past, two by two, in order of size, from the elephants and lions to the stoats and ducks, as on the day when they went into Noah's ark. In the shadow of a cave he would hurl unerring javelins at them; others came on; there was no end to it; and he would wake with wild eyes rolling.

Princes among his friends invited him to the chase. He refused always, thinking by this sort of penance to avert the disaster; for it seemed to him that on the slaying of animals his parents' fate depended. But he suffered from not seeing them, and his other desire became unbearable.

His wife, to entertain him, had minstrels and dancing-girls brought.

She would go about the country-side with him, in an open litter; or again, lying on the deck of a skiff, they would watch the fish straying through the water, which was clear as the sky. Often she would toss flowers in his face; crouching at his feet she would pick out tunes on a three-stringed mandoline; then, laying her clasped hands on his shoulder, she would say in a timid voice: "What ails you, dear lord?"

He would not answer, or would burst into sobs: at last one day he confessed his horrible thought.

She argued against it, reasoning very soundly; his father and mother were in all probability dead; if he did ever see them again, by what chance, for what purpose, should he be brought to commit such an abomination? Well, then, his fear was groundless, and he ought to take up hunting again.

Julian smiled as he listened, but could not bring himself to gratify his desire.

One evening in the month of August, when they were in their chamber, she had just got into bed and he was kneeling down to pray, when he heard the yelp of a fox, and then light steps under the window, and in the gloom he got a glimpse of what looked like animal forms. The temptation was too strong. He took down his quiver.

She seemed surprised.

"It is in obedience to you!" he said; "at sunrise I shall be back."

Nevertheless she dreaded some disaster happening.

He reassured her, and went out, surprised at her inconsistent moods.

Shortly afterwards a page came to say that two strangers, in the absence of the lord of the castle, were asking urgently for the lady.

And soon there came into the room an old man and an old woman, bowed, dusty, in linen garments, each leaning on a stick.

They made bold to announce that they were bringing Julian news of his parents.

She leant down to hear them.

But, after exchanging a glance, they asked her if he still loved them, and if he ever spoke of them.

"Oh, yes!" said she.

Then they cried:

"Well, we are they!" and they sat down, being very weary and jaded with fatigue.

There was nothing to make the young wife sure that her husband was their son.

They gave her proof of it, by describing special marks which he had on his skin.

She sprang from her couch, called her page, and a meal was served to them.

Although they were very hungry they could hardly eat; and she sat apart watching the trembling of their bony hands as they lifted the goblets.

They asked numberless questions about Julian. She answered each one, but was careful to keep silence with regard to the ominous idea concerning themselves.

Finding that he did not come back they had set out from their castle, and they had been faring on their way for several years, following vague clues, without losing hope. So much money had been required for bridge tolls and in inns, for princes' dues and robbers' exactions, that their purse was absolutely empty, and they were now beggars. But what did it matter, since soon they would be embracing

their son? They extolled his good fortune in having so charming a wife, and could not look at her and kiss her enough.

They were greatly astonished at the richness of their lodging; and the old father, examining the walls, asked why they bore the coat of arms of the Emperor of Occitania.

She replied:

"He is my father!"

Then he started, remembering the Bohemian's prophecy; and the old mother thought of the Hermit's words. Doubtless her son's glory was only the dawn of everlasting splendour; and both sat there agape in the glow of the chandelier, by which the table was lighted.

They must have been very handsome in their youth. The mother had not lost any of her hair, and its fine smooth loops, like slabs of snow, hung low on her cheeks; and the father, with his tall figure and great beard, looked like a statue in a church.

Julian's wife besought them not to wait for him. She saw them to bed herself, in her own bed, then shut the casement, and they fell asleep. It was on the point of daybreak, and outside the window the birds were beginning to sing.

Julian had crossed the park, and he was walking through the forest at a vigorous pace, enjoying the softness of the grass and the balminess of the air.

The shadow of the trees lay on the moss. Sometimes the moon made patches of white in the glades, and he hesitated to go forward, thinking he saw a pool of water, or sometimes the surface of the quiet meres merged into the colour of the grass. Everywhere there was a great silence; and he could not discover any of the animals which, a few minutes before, had been wandering round his castle.

The wood grew thicker, the darkness profound. Gusts of hot wind blew, heavy with enervating odours. He kept

sinking into heaps of dead leaves, and leant against an oak to pant a little.

Suddenly, behind his back, there leapt out a darker object, a wild boar. Julian had not time to seize his bow, and he was distressed by this as by a misfortune.

Then, when he had come out of the wood, he espied a wolf speeding along by a hedge.

Julian shot an arrow at him. The wolf stopped, turned its head to look at him, and set off again. It trotted along, keeping always at the same distance, stopping from time to time, and as soon as Julian aimed at it, beginning to run away again.

Julian crossed in this wise an endless plain, then some sand-hillocks, and at last found himself on a plateau overlooking a great stretch of country.

There were flat stones lying scattered among ruined vaults. One went stumbling over dead men's bones; here and there worm-eaten crosses stood at a mournful slant. But shapes began to move in the vague shadow of the tombs, and hyenas sprang up terrified and panting. Making a pattering noise with their claws on the stones, they drew near and sniffed at him, with their gaping jaws disclosing their gums. He unsheathed his sword. They went off all at once in every direction, and keeping up their hurried, halting gallop, were lost in the distance in a cloud of dust.

An hour later he met in a gorge a mad bull, with lowered horns, pawing the sand. Julian thrust at it with his lance beneath its dewlap. It shivered in pieces, as if the beast had been made of bronze; he shut his eyes, and waited for death. When he opened them again the bull had disappeared.

Then his soul fainted within him from shame. Some superior power was destroying his strength, and in order to turn back home he went into the forest again.

It was choked with creepers, and he was cutting them with his sword when a marten slipped suddenly between his

legs, a panther bounded over his shoulder, a serpent reared itself in coils round an ash tree.

In its foliage was a huge jackdaw, watching Julian; and here and there a number of great sparks appeared among the branches, as if the heavens had rained down all their stars into the forest. They were the eyes of beasts, wild cats, squirrels, owls, parrots, and monkeys.

Julian sent a shower of arrows among them, and the arrows, with their feathers, settled on the leaves like white butterflies. He threw stones at them, and the stones fell without touching anything. He cursed himself, longed to fight something, shouted out imprecations, choked with rage.

And all the animals he had pursued showed themselves again, making a narrow ring round him. Some were sitting on their haunches, others drawn up to their full height. He remained in the middle, frozen with terror, incapable of the slightest movement. By a supreme effort of will he took a step forward; the creatures perched on the trees spread their wings, those standing on the ground moved their limbs; and all of them went with him.

The hyenas went in front, the wolf and the boar behind. The bull, on his right, swung its head from side to side; and on his left the snake writhed through the grass, while the panther, arching its back, paced along, velvet-footed. He went as slowly as possible so as not to provoke them, and he saw, coming forth from the depths of the bushes, hedgehogs, foxes, vipers, jackals, and bears.

Julian began to run, and they ran too. The snake hissed, the foul beasts slavered. The boar rubbed his heels with its tusks, the wolf the palms of his hands with its whiskers. The monkeys pinched him and grimaced, the marten rolled on his feet. A bear knocked his hat off with its paw, and the panther disdainfully dropped an arrow which it was carrying in its mouth.

There was irony beneath the slyness of their demeanour.

Watching him out of the corners of their eyes, they seemed to be brooding over some scheme of revenge the while; and, deafened by the buzzing of the insects, buffeted by birds' tails, suffocated by evil breaths, he walked on with his arms outstretched and his eyes closed like a blind man, without even the strength to cry for mercy.

The crow of a cock rang out on the air. Others answered; it was day; and he recognized, beyond the orange trees, the topmost roof of his palace.

Then, on the edge of a field, he saw, three paces away, some red partridges fluttering among the stubble. He unclasped his cloak and threw it over them like a net. When he had uncovered them, he found but one, and that one had been dead a long time, and was decomposed.

This disappointment exasperated him more than all the others. His thirst for carnage came on him again; and since animals were lacking he would fain have slaughtered men.

He ascended the three terraces, broke open the door with a blow of his fist; but at the foot of the stairs the memory of his beloved wife softened his heart. She was probably asleep, and he would come upon her unawares.

Taking off his sandals, he turned the lock gently and went in.

The leaded window panes dimmed the pale light of dawn. Julian caught his foot in some clothes on the floor; a little farther on he knocked against a side-table still laden with dishes. "I suppose she had something to eat," he said to himself; and he advanced toward the bed, which was hidden in the darkness at the end of the room. When he was beside it, in order to kiss his wife, he bent down over the pillow where the two heads were resting side by side. Then he felt against his lips the touch of a beard.

He started back, thinking he was going mad; but he came back to the bedside, and his fingers, groping about, came upon hair—very long hair. To convince himself that

he was not mistaken, he passed his hand slowly over the pillow again. It was certainly a beard this time, and a man! a man lying with his wife!

In a burst of ungovernable rage he leapt on them with his dagger; he stamped and foamed, yelling like a wild beast. Then he stopped. The victims, stabbed to the heart, had not even moved. He listened attentively to the rattle of their dying breath, which came almost in unison, and as it grew fainter, another in the distance took it up. Faint at first, the plaintive voice, long-drawn-out, came nearer, swelled, became cruel; and he recognized with terror the bellowing of the great black stag.

And as he turned, he thought he saw, framed in the doorway, the wraith of his wife, a light in her hand.

The noise of the murder had brought her to the spot, and with a comprehensive glance she took in the whole situation, and fled in horror, dropping the torch.

He picked it up.

His father and mother were before him, lying on their backs with a hole in their breasts; and their faces, in their mild majesty, looked as if keeping some eternal secret. Splashes and pools of blood showed on their white skin, on the sheets, the floor, and all down an ivory Christ hanging in the alcove. The crimson glow of the stained glass, on which the sun was striking at the time, lighted up the red splashes, and multiplied them all through the room.

Julian went toward the two dead bodies, telling himself, and trying to think, that it was not possible, that he had made a mistake, that inexplicable likenesses do occur sometimes. At last he stooped slightly to look at the old man closely, and he saw between the half-closed lids a dim eye that burned him like fire. Then he moved round to the other side of the couch, where the other body was lying, the white hair concealing part of the face. Julian slipped his fingers under the tresses of hair and lifted the head and gazed at it, holding it at arm's length, rigidly, while with his

other hand he held the torch so as to give a light. Drops oozing from the mattress fell one by one on the floor.

At the end of the day he presented himself before his wife; and in a voice different from his usual one he bade her in the first place not to reply to him, not to come near him, not even to look at him again; and that she must carry out, on pain of everlasting punishment, all his orders, which were irrevocable.

The burial was to be performed according to the instructions which he had left in writing on a prayer-stool in the chamber where the dead bodies lay. He was relinquishing to her his palace, his vassals, all his possessions, not even keeping his wearing apparel, and his sandals, which would be found at the top of the stairway.

She had obeyed God's will in bringing about his crime, and must pray for his soul, since henceforth he no longer lived.

The dead were buried with pomp in a monastery church three days distant from the castle. A monk, in a cloak with the cowl pulled over his head, followed the procession, far away from everybody else, and no one dared to speak to him.

He remained during Mass prone in the midst of the doorway, his arms outspread in the shape of a cross, and his forehead in the dust.

After the burial he was seen to take the road leading to the mountains. He looked back several times, and at length disappeared.

III

He went away into the world, begging his bread.

He held out his hand for charity to horsemen on the roads, went up to harvesters and bent the knee before them, or stood motionless at the gates of courtyards; and his face was so sad that he was never refused alms.

In a spirit of humility he used to tell his story; and then

everybody fled, making the sign of the cross. In villages through which he had already passed, as soon as he was recognized, the doors would be shut against him, threats were called out, and stones were thrown at him. The more charitable would set a bowl on their window-ledge, and then close the shutter so as not to see him.

Rebuffed on all sides, he avoided men, and lived on roots and plants and chance fruit, and shell-fish which he sought for along the sea shore.

Sometimes from the brow of a hill he would see below him a medley of crowded roofs, with stone spires, bridges, towers, and dark intersecting streets, whence a continual hum rose to his ears.

The craving to join in the life of other men would make him go down into the town. But the animal look of the faces, the noise of the different trades, the dullness of the conversations froze his heart. On feast days, when the great bell of the cathedral filled the whole populace with joy from daybreak, he would watch the inhabitants coming forth from their houses, and then the dancing in the market-places, the fountains of ale at the cross-roads, the damask awnings in front of the princes' houses, and, when evening had come, through the ground-floor windows, the long family tables where old grandsires sat with little children on their laps; he would be choked by sobs, and would turn away back to the country.

He gazed with transports of love at the colts in the pastures, the birds in their nests, the insects on the flowers; but they all at his approach ran farther off, or hid affrighted, or flew away swiftly.

He sought out lonely places. But the wind brought to his ears, as it were, the sound of dying agonies; the tears of the dew as they fell on the earth reminded him of other and heavier drops. The sun every evening spread blood among the clouds; and every night in his dreams the murder of his parents began all over again.

He made himself a hair shirt with iron spikes in it. He climbed on his knees all the hills which had a chapel on their summit. But the relentless thought dimmed the splendour of the tabernacles, tortured him through the mortification of the penance.

He did not rebel against God who had ordained his action, and yet he was in despair at having been capable of committing it.

He was filled with such horror of his own person that, hoping to free himself of it, he risked it in perilous ventures. He saved paralytics from fires, children from the depths of chasms. The abyss cast him up again, the flames spared him.

Time did not assuage his suffering, and it became unbearable. He made up his mind to die.

And one day, when he was at the brink of a spring, leaning over it to judge of the depth of the water, he saw facing him a gaunt old man, white-bearded and so wretched-looking that he could not restrain his tears. The other also wept. Without recognizing his own reflection, Julian vaguely recalled a face resembling the one before him. He gave a cry; it was his father; and he had no further thought of killing himself.

So, bearing the burden of memory, he journeyed through many lands; and drew near to a river which was dangerous to cross, because of its impetuosity and because there was a wide stretch of mud on its banks. No one for a long time past had dared to cross.

An old boat lay with its stern buried and its bows sticking up among the reeds. Julian examined it and found a pair of oars; and he conceived the idea of using his life in the service of others.

He began by constructing on the river bank a sort of causeway by which people could go down to the stream; and he broke his nails moving the huge stones, propped them against his body to carry them, slipped in the mud, sank in it, and very nearly perished several times over.

Then he mended the boat with wreckage, and made himself a hut with clay and tree trunks.

When once the crossing was known, travellers presented themselves. They hailed him from the opposite bank, waving flags; Julian hastily leapt into his boat. It was very heavy; and they overloaded it with packs and baggage of all kinds, not counting the beasts of burden, which, kicking with fright, increased the confusion. He asked nothing for his trouble. Some gave him scraps of food from their wallets, or worn-out clothes which they did not want any longer. Brutes yelled out curses. Julian rebuked them gently, and they retaliated with insults. He contented himself with blessing them.

A little table, a stool, a bed of dead leaves, and three clay drinking vessels were his sole furniture. Two holes in the walls served as windows. On one side, as far as the eye could see, stretched barren plains with wan-looking ponds here and there on their surface; and before him rolled the greenish waters of the great river.

In spring the damp earth smelt of rottenness. Then a mighty wind would raise the dust in whirling clouds. It penetrated everywhere, made the water muddy, gritted between the teeth. A little later on came clouds of mosquitoes, whose singing and biting never stopped day or night. Then followed cruel frosts, which made things as stiff as stones and caused a frantic appetite for meat.

Months passed when Julian saw no one. Often he would close his eyes, and try in memory to get back to his young days;—and the courtyard of a castle would appear, with greyhounds on a flight of steps, serving-men in the armoury, and under a bower of vines a fair-haired youth between an old man wrapped in furs and a lady with a great horned head-dress; all at once the two dead bodies were before him. He would throw himself face downwards on his bed, and weeping, say over and over again:

"Ah, poor father and mother! poor mother!" and he

would fall into a drowsy slumber in which the mournful visions still went on.

One night as he slept he thought he heard someone calling. He listened with all his ears, but could distinguish nothing save the roaring of the waves.

But the same voice began again:

"Julian!"

It came from the other bank, which seemed to him extraordinary, considering the width of the river.

The call came a third time:

"Julian!"

And the voice, crying aloud, had the sound of a church bell.

Lighting his lantern he went out of the hut. The night was filled with a raging hurricane. The darkness was profound, rent here and there by the white of leaping waves.

After a moment's hesitation Julian cast off the mooring-rope. The water immediately became still, the boat glided over it, and touched the other bank, where a man was waiting.

He was wrapped in a ragged linen cloth; his face was like a plaster cast, and his eyes redder than burning coals. On bringing the lantern near him, Julian saw that he was covered all over with a hideous leprosy; and yet in his bearing there was something of royal majesty.

Directly he got into the boat it sank strangely, borne down by his weight; a jerk brought it up again, and Julian started rowing.

At every pull the swirl of the waters lifted it by the bows. The water, blacker than ink, rushed furiously past its sides. It was hollowed into gulfs, and rose into mountains, and the craft leapt up and then sank again into depths where it turned about, tossed to and fro by the wind.

Julian leant forward, stretched out his arms, and, bracing

his feet firmly, threw himself back with a wrench of the body so as to get more force. The hail lashed his hands, the rain streamed down his back, the violence of the wind caught his breath, and he stopped. Then the boat was swept along adrift. But, realizing that this was some important matter, some order that must not be disobeyed, he took up his oars again; and the rattle of the thole pins broke in upon the din of the storm.

The little lantern was burning before him. Birds fluttering past hid it from time to time. But all the while he saw the eyes of the Leper, who was standing erect in the stern, motionless as a pillar.

And this went on for a long, long time!

When they had reached the hut Julian shut the door; and he saw him seated on the stool. The sort of shroud that covered him had slipped down to his hips; and his shoulders, breast and thin arms could not be seen for blotches of scaly pustules. His brow was furrowed by huge wrinkles. Like a skeleton, he had a hole where the nose should be; and from his bluish lips issued breath as thick as a mist and loathsome.

"I am hungry," said he.

Julian gave him what he had, an old flitch of bacon and the crust of a loaf of black bread.

When he had devoured them, the table, the dish and the knife-handle had the same spots on them as showed on his body.

Then he said: "I am thirsty."

Julian went and fetched his pitcher; and as he took it up, there arose from it a fragrant perfume which made his heart and nostrils dilate. It was wine; what a godsend! But the Leper stretched out his hand, and emptied the whole pitcher at a draught.

Then he said: "I am cold."

Julian, with his candle, set light to a bundle of bracken in the middle of the hovel.

The Leper drew near to warm himself, and squatting on his heels, he trembled in every limb, and grew weaker; his eyes no longer glowed, his ulcers became running sores; and in a dying voice he murmured: "Your bed!"

Julian helped him gently to drag himself to it, and even spread the sail of his boat over him to cover him.

The Leper moaned. The corners of his lips lifted, showing his teeth, his chest heaved as the dying breath came more and more quickly, and his belly, at each inhalation, was drawn in to the very backbone.

Then he closed his eyes.

"It feels like ice in my bones. Come close to me!"

And Julian, pushing the sail aside, lay down side by side with him on the dead leaves.

The Leper turned his head.

"Undress, so that I may get the warmth of your body!"

Julian took off his clothes; then, naked as on the day he was born, he got back into the bed; and he felt against his thigh the Leper's skin, colder than a snake and as rough as a file.

He tried to encourage him; and the other answered, gasping:

"Ah, I am dying! . . . Get closer, warm me! not with your hands! no, your whole body!"

Julian laid himself right over him, mouth to mouth, breast to breast.

Then the Leper clasped him in his arms; and his eyes all at once became as bright as stars; his hair lengthened out like the beams of the sun; the breath of his nostrils had the sweetness of roses; a cloud of incense rose from the hearth, the waves sang. Meanwhile a fullness of bliss, a superhuman joy came down like a flood into Julian's heart as he lay swooning; and the one in whose arms he was still clasped grew and grew, his head and his feet touching the two walls of the hovel. The roof flew off, the heavens unfolded; and

Julian rose toward the blue, face to face with the Lord Jesus who was bearing him to Heaven.

And that is the story of Saint Julian the Hospitaller, more or less as it is to be found on a church window near my old home.

(II)

HERODIAS

(Translated by FREDERIC WHITE)

I

THE citadel of Machærus stood on the eastern shore of the Dead Sea, on a cone-shaped basaltic peak. Four deep valleys surrounded it, two on the sides, one in front, the fourth behind. Houses clustered about its base, within the enclosure formed by a wall which rose and fell with the undulations of the ground; and by a zigzag road, hewn in the rock, the town was connected with the fortress, whose walls were one hundred and twenty cubits high, with many angles, battlements on the edge, and here and there towers, forming the ornamentation, as it were, of that crown of stone, suspended over the abyss.

Within there was a palace, adorned with porticoes and sheltered by a terrace, about which ran a balustrade of sycamore wood, with tall poles arranged to hold a tent.

One morning, before dawn, the Tetrarch Herod Antipas leaned on the balustrade and looked forth.

Immediately beneath him the mountains were beginning to show their peaks, while their dense masses, to the lowest depths of the ravines, were still in shadow. The hovering mist was rent asunder, and the outlines of the Dead Sea appeared. The dawn, breaking behind Machærus, diffused

a reddish light. Soon it illuminated the sands on the shore, the hills, the desert, and, farther away, all the mountains of Judea, with their jagged grey slopes. En-Gedi, in the centre, formed a black bar; Hebron, in the background, was rounded like a dome; Eshtaol was covered with pomegranates, Sorek with vineyards, Carmel with fields of sesame; and the Tower of Antonia, with its monstrous cube, dominated Jerusalem. The Tetrarch turned his eyes to the right, to gaze upon the palm trees of Jericho; and he thought of the other cities of his Galilee: Capernaum, Endor, Nazareth, Tiberias, whither perhaps he would never go again. Meanwhile the Jordan flowed through the barren plain. All white, it was as dazzling as a field of snow. Now the lake seemed to be of lapis lazuli; and at its southern point, in the direction of Yemen, Antipas saw what he dreaded to see. Brown tents were scattered here and there; men with lances went to and fro among the horses; and dying fires gleamed like sparks, level with the ground.

They were the troops of the King of the Arabs, whose daughter he had cast aside to take Herodias, wife to one of his brothers, who lived in Italy with no pretension to power.

Antipas was awaiting succour from the Romans; and as Vitellius, Governor of Syria, did not appear, he was consumed with impatience.

Doubtless Agrippa had ruined him in the mind of the Emperor? Philip, his third brother, sovereign of Batanea, was secretly arming. The Jews would have no more of his idolatrous customs, nor all the rest of his domineering sway; so that he was hesitating between two plans: to beguile the Arabs, or to enter into an alliance with the Parthians; and, on the pretext of celebrating his birthday, he had bidden to a great banquet, for that very day, the leaders of his troops, the stewards of his estates, and the chief men of Galilee. With a keen glance he scanned all the roads. They were empty. Eagles flew over his head; the soldiers were sleeping against

the walls, along the rampart; nothing stirred within the castle.

Of a sudden a voice in the distance, as if escaping from the bowels of the earth, made the Tetrarch turn pale. He leaned forward to listen; it had ceased. It began again, and he clapped his hands and called:

"Mannæus! Mannæus!"

A man appeared, naked to the waist, like the masseurs at baths. He was very tall, aged, fleshless, and wore at his hip a cutlass in a copper sheath. His hair, brushed back and held in place by a comb, exaggerated the height of his brow. His eyes were dull with drowsiness, but his teeth gleamed and his toes rested lightly on the flagstones, his whole body having the suppleness of a monkey and his face the impassiveness of a mummy.

"Where is he?" asked the Tetrarch.

Mannæus replied, pointing with his thumb to something behind them:

"There! still there!"

"I thought that I heard him!"

And Antipas, having drawn a long breath of relief, inquired concerning Iaokanann, the same man whom the Latins called St. John the Baptist. Had those two men been seen again who had been admitted as a favour to his dungeon some months before; and had the purpose with which they had come been learned since?

Mannæus replied:

"They exchanged some words with him in secret, like thieves at a cross-roads in the night. Then they went away towards Upper Galilee, announcing that they were the bearers of great tidings."

Antipas hung his head, then exclaimed in a tone of alarm:

"Keep him! keep him! And let no one enter! Lock the door fast! Cover the hole! None must even suspect that he lives!"

Before receiving these orders Mannæus had carried them out; for Ioakanann was a Jew; and, like all Samaritans, he abhorred the Jews.

Their temple of Gerizim, intended by Moses to be the centre of Israel, had ceased to exist since the time of King Hyrcanus; and that of Jerusalem drove them to frenzy as an outrage and a lasting injustice. Mannæus had made his way into it in order to sully the altar with dead men's bones. His confederates, less swift of foot than he, had been beheaded.

He saw it in the gap between two hills. Its white marble walls and the golden lines of its roof shone resplendent in the sun. It was like a luminous mountain—something superhuman, crushing all else by its magnificence and its pride.

Then he extended his arms towards Zion; and, standing erect, with head thrown back and fists clenched, he hurled a malediction at it, believing that words had real power.

Antipas listened and did not seem shocked.

The Samaritan continued:

"At times he becomes excited, he longs to fly, he hopes for a rescue. At other times he has the tranquil aspect of a sick beast; or else I see him walking to and fro in the darkness, saying: 'What matters it? That He may grow great, I must needs shrink!'"

Antipas and Mannæus glanced at each other. But the Tetrarch was weary of reflection.

All those mountains about him, like terraces of huge petrified waves, the black ravines on the sides of the cliffs, the immensity of the blue vault, the brilliant glamour of the day, the depth of the abysses, disturbed him; and a wave of desolation swept over him at the spectacle of the desert, which, in the upheavals of its surface, formed amphitheatres and ruined palaces. The hot wind brought, with the odour of sulphur, an exhalation, as it were, from the accursed cities, buried lower than the banks beneath the

heavy waters of the lake. These tokens of an immortal wrath brought dismay to his mind; and he stood, with both elbows on the balustrade, staring eyes, and his hands pressed against his temples. Someone touched him. He turned. Herodias stood before him.

A light purple robe covered her to the sandals. Having come forth hurriedly from her chamber, she wore neither necklace nor earrings; a tress of her black hair fell over one arm, and its end was lost to sight between her breasts. Her two open nostrils throbbed; a joyous expression of triumph lighted up her face; and in a loud voice, shaking the Tetrarch's arm, she said:

"Cæsar loves us! Agrippa is in prison!"

"Who told you so?"

"I know it."

She added:

"It is for having aspired to Caius's [1] empire!"

While living on their alms, he had schemed to obtain the title of king, which they, like him, coveted. But in the future no more fear! "Tiberius's dungeons are hard to open, and sometimes life is not secure therein!"

Antipas understood her; and, although she was Agrippa's sister, her atrocious purpose seemed to him justified. Such murders were a consequence of the state of affairs, a fatality attached to royal families. In Herod's they had become too numerous to count.

Then she set forth her plan: clients bought, letters discovered, spies at every door; and how she had succeeded in seducing Eutyches the denouncer. "Nothing deterred me! Have I not done even more for you? I have abandoned my daughter!"

After her divorce she had left the child in Rome, hoping to have others by the Tetrarch. She never mentioned her. He wondered why that outburst of affection.

The tent had been spread, and huge cushions were

[1] The Emperor Caligula.—[TRANS.]

speedily brought to them. Herodias sank upon them and wept, turning her head to him. Then she passed her hand over her eyes, said that she proposed to think no more about it, that she was happy; and she recalled to his mind their chats yonder in the atrium, their meetings at the baths, their strolls along the Via Sacra, and the evenings at the great villas, amid the plashing of fountains, beneath arches of flowers, by the Roman Campagna. She gazed at him as of yore, rubbing against his breast, with cajoling gestures. He pushed her away. The love that she tried to kindle was so far away now! And all his misfortunes had flowed from it; for war had raged well-nigh twelve years. It had aged the Tetrarch. His shoulders were bent; in his sad-coloured toga with a violet border his white hair blended with his beard, and the sun, shining through the veil, bathed with light his troubled brow. Herodias's too was wrinkled; and, seated face to face, they eyed each other fiercely.

The roads over the mountain began to be peopled. Herdsmen drove their cattle, children dragged donkeys along, grooms led horses. Those who descended the heights above Machærus disappeared behind the castle; others ascended the ravine opposite, and, having reached the town, discharged their burdens in the courtyards. They were the Tetrarch's purveyors, and servants preceding his guests.

But, at the foot of the terrace, on the left, an Essene appeared, in a white robe, bare-footed, with a stoical air. Mannæus, on the right, rushed forward, brandishing his cutlass.

"Kill him!" cried Herodias.

"Hold!" said the Tetrarch.

He stood still; the other did likewise.

Then they withdrew, each by a different stairway, walking backward, keeping their eyes fixed on each other.

"I know him!" said Herodias; "his name is Phanuel, and he seeks speech with Iaokanann, since you are blind enough to spare his life!"

Antipas suggested that he might some day be of use. His attacks upon Jerusalem would win to their side the rest of the Jews.

"No!" she said; "they accept all masters and are not capable of forming a fatherland!" As for him who stirred the people with hopes never lost since the days of Nehemiah, the best policy was to suppress him.

There was no need of haste in the Tetrarch's opinion. Iaokanann dangerous! Folly! he feigned to laugh at the idea.

"Hold your peace!" And she repeated the tale of her humiliation one day when she was going towards Gilead to gather balsam. People were putting on their clothes on the bank of a stream. On a low hill near by a man was speaking. He had a camel's skin about his loins, and his head resembled a lion's. "As soon as he saw me he spit out at me all the maledictions of the prophets. His eyes shot fire; his voice roared; he raised his arms as if to tear the thunder from on high. Impossible to fly! the wheels of my chariot were buried in sand to the axles; and I drove away slowly, sheltering myself beneath my cloak, my blood congealed by those insults, which fell like a shower of rain."

Iaokanann made life impossible to her. When he was taken and bound with cords, the soldiers were ordered to stab him if he resisted; he was as gentle as a lamb. They had put serpents in his dungeon; they were dead.

The futility of these tricks drove Herodias mad. Besides, what was the cause of his war against her? What interest guided him? His harangues, delivered to crowds, were circulated, spread abroad; she heard them everywhere, they filled the air. Against legions she would have been stout of heart. But that power, more harmful than the sword, and intangible, was stupefying, and she paced the terrace, livid with wrath, lacking words to express the passion that suffocated her.

She reflected, too, that the Tetrarch, yielding to public

opinion, would perhaps deem it best to cast her off. In that case all would be lost! From childhood she had cherished the dream of mighty empire. It was to attain it that, deserting her first husband, she had allied herself to this one, who, she thought, had deceived her.

"I obtained a powerful support when I entered your family!"

"It is equal to yours!" rejoined the Tetrarch, simply.

Herodias felt the blood of the priests and kings who were her ancestors boiling in her veins.

"But your grandfather swept the temple of Ascalon! The others were shepherds, bandits, heads of caravans, a wandering horde, subject to Judah from the time of King David! All my ancestors vanquished yours! The first of the Maccabees drove you forth from Hebron; Hyrcanus forced you to be circumcized!" And, giving vent to the patrician's scorn for the plebeian, Jacob's hatred of Edom,[1] she reproached him for his indifference to insults, for his mildness towards the Phœnicians, who betrayed him, his cowardly subservience to the people, who detested him. "You are like them, admit it! And you sigh for the Arab girl who danced around the stones! Take her! Go, live with her, in her canvas house! feed on her bread cooked in the ashes! drink the curdled milk of her sheep! kiss her blue cheeks! and forget me!"

The Tetrarch was no longer listening. He was gazing at the roof of a house, on which there were a young girl and an old woman holding a parasol with a reed handle as long as a fisher's line. In the centre of the rug stood a great travelling-basket, open. Girdles, veils, jewels overflowed from it in a confused mass. Now and again the girl stooped towards those objects and shook them in the air. She was dressed like the Roman women, in a wrinkled tunic, with a peplum adorned with emerald tassels; and blue bands confined her hair, which was doubtless too heavy, for from

[1] Esau.—[TRANS.]

time to time she put her hand to it. The shadow of the parasol hovered above her, half hiding her. Twice or thrice Antipas caught a glimpse of her shapely neck, the corner of an ear, or of a tiny mouth. But he saw her whole figure, from the hips to the neck, as she bent forward and drew herself up again with supple grace. He watched for the repetition of that movement, and his breath came faster; flames kindled in his eyes. Herodias observed him.

He asked: "Who is she?"

She answered that she had no knowledge, and left him, suddenly appeased.

The Tetrarch was awaited under the porticoes by the Galileans, the master of the writings, the chief of the pasturage, the director of the salt-wells, and a Jew of Babylon, in command of his horsemen. All hailed him with loud acclamations. Then he vanished towards the inner chambers.

Phanuel appeared at the angle of a passage.

"Ah! again? You came to see Iaokanann doubtless?"

"And you! I have to tell you something of moment."

And, following Antipas, he entered, at his heels, a dark apartment.

The light entered through a barred opening that extended along the wall under the cornice. The walls were painted a dark pomegranate colour, almost black. At the end stood an ebony bed, with cords of ox hide. A golden buckler, above, gleamed like a sun.

Antipas walked the whole length of the room, and lay down on the bed.

Phanuel was standing. He raised his arm, and said in the attitude of one inspired:

"The Most High sends one of his sons to earth now and again. Iaokanann is such an one. If you oppress him you will be punished."

"It is he who persecutes me!" cried Antipas. "He demanded of me an impossible act. Since then he has rent

me. And I was not harsh at the beginning! He has even sent forth from Machærus men who overturn my provinces. A curse upon his life! Since he attacks me, I defend myself!"

"His fits of anger are too violent," replied Phanuel. "No matter! He must be set free."

"One does not set free raging beasts!" said the Tetrarch.

"Have no fear," the Essene replied. "He will go hence to the Arabs, the Gauls, the Scythians. His work is destined to reach to the ends of the earth!"

Antipas seemed lost in a vision.

"His power is mighty! Against my will, I love him."

"Then let him be free!"

The Tetrarch shook his head. He feared Herodias, Mannæus, and the unknown.

Phanuel strove to persuade him, alleging as a guaranty of his plans the submission of the Essenes to the king. People respected those poor men, unconquerable by torture, always clad in flax, and able to read the future in the stars.

Antipas recalled the words he had let fall a moment before.

"What is this thing which you said was of moment?"

A negro appeared. His body was white with dust. He gasped for breath and could only say:

"Vitellius!"

"What! has he arrived?"

"I saw him. Within three hours he will be here!"

The portières at the doors of the corridors were separated as by the wind. A busy hum filled the castle, a tumult of people running to and fro, of furniture being dragged about, of silver plate falling to the floor; and from the towers trumpets sounded, to call the scattered slaves.

II

The ramparts were thronged with people when Vitellius entered the courtyard. He was leaning on his interpreter's arm, followed by a great red litter adorned with

plumes and mirrors; he wore the toga, the laticlave, the buskins of a consul, and his person was surrounded by lictors.

They leaned against the door their twelve fasces—staves bound together by a strap, with an axe in the centre. Thereupon one and all trembled before the majesty of the Roman people.

The litter, borne by eight men, stopped. Then stepped forth a youth with a fat paunch, a blotched face, and pearls along his fingers. He was offered a glass of wine and spices. He drank it and demanded a second.

The Tetrarch had fallen at the Proconsul's feet, grieved, he said, that he had not been sooner informed of the favour of his presence. Otherwise he would have ordered that whatever the Vitellii might require should await them along the roads. They were descended from the goddess Vitellia. A road leading from Janiculum to the sea still bore their name. Quæstorships and consulships were innumerable in the family; and as for Lucius, now his guest, they owed thanks to him as the conqueror of the Cliti and as the father of the young Aulus,[1] who seemed to be returning to his own domain, since the Orient was the fatherland of the gods.

These hyperbolical compliments were delivered in Latin. Vitellius accepted them impassively.

He replied that the great Herod sufficed to make a nation glorious. The Athenians had entrusted to him the management of the Olympic games. He had built temples in honour of Augustus, had been patient, ingenious, awe-inspiring, and always loyal to the Cæsars.

Between the pillars, with their brazen capitals, Herodias was seen, advancing with the air of an empress, amid women and eunuchs carrying burning perfumes on silver-gilt salvers.

The Proconsul took three steps to meet her; and, having saluted him with an inclination of the head:

[1] Afterwards the Emperor Vitellius.—[TRANS.]

"What joy!" she cried; "henceforth, Agrippa, the enemy of Tiberius, is powerless to do harm!"

He knew nothing of the event; it seemed to him perilous; and as Antipas swore that he would do everything for the Emperor, Vitellius added: "Even to the injury of others?"

He had taken hostages from the King of the Parthians, and the Emperor had forgotten it; for Antipas, being present at the conference, to give himself importance, had instantly despatched the news. Hence a deep-rooted hatred, and delay in sending succour.

The Tetrarch stammered, but Aulus said, laughing:

"Fear not; I will protect you!"

The Proconsul pretended not to have heard. The father's fortune depended on the son's debasement; and that flower from the mire of Capræ procured him advantages so considerable that he encompassed it with attentions, distrusting it all the while because it was poisonous.

A tumult arose beneath the gate. A file of white mules was led in, ridden by persons in priestly costume. They were Sadducees and Pharisees, led to Machærus by the same object of ambition, the first wishing to obtain the honourable post of sacrificer, the others to retain it. Their faces were dark, especially those of the Pharisees, foes of Rome and of the Tetrarch. The skirts of their tunics embarrassed them in the press; and their tiaras rested insecurely on their brows, above bands of parchment, whereon words were written.

At almost the same time some soldiers of the vanguard arrived. They had placed their shields in bags, to protect them from the dust; and behind them was Marcellus, lieutenant to the Proconsul, with publicans carrying tablets of wood under their armpits.

Antipas named the principal persons of his suite: Tolmai, Kanthera, Sebon, Ammonius, of Alexandria, who bought asphalt for him, Naaman, captain of his velites, and Jacim the Babylonian.

Vitellius had observed Mannæus.

"Who is that man?"

The Tetrarch, with a gesture, gave him to understand that he was the executioner.

Then he presented the Sadducees.

Jonathas, a small man of free manners, speaking Greek, begged the master to honour them by a visit to Jerusalem.—He would probably go thither.

Eleazar, with hooked nose and long beard, demanded for the Pharisees the cloak of the high priest, detained in the Tower of Antonia by the civil authorities.

Then the Galileans denounced Pontius Pilate. Taking advantage of the act of a madman who was seeking David's vessel of gold in a cave near Samaria, he had killed some of the inhabitants. And they all spoke at once, Mannæus with more violence than the others. Vitellius declared that the criminals should be punished.

Loud exclamations arose in front of a portico where the soldiers had hung their shields. The coverings being removed, there was seen on the bosses the image of Cæsar. That, to the Jews, was idolatry. Antipas harangued them, while Vitellius, from an elevated seat on the colonnade, looked on in amazement at their wrath. Tiberius had done well to banish four hundred of them to Sardinia. But at home they were strong; and he ordered the bucklers to be removed.

Thereupon they surrounded the Proconsul, imploring reparation for injustice, privileges, alms. Clothes were torn, they trampled upon one another; and, to make room, slaves struck right and left with staves. Those nearest the gateway went down to the road; others ascended it; the tide flowed back; two currents met in that mass of men, which swayed back and forth, hemmed in by the encircling walls.

Vitellius asked why there were so many people. Antipas told him the reason: his birthday festival; and he pointed

out several of his people, who leaned over the battlements, lowering enormous baskets of meat, fruit, vegetables, antelopes and storks, large sky-blue fish, grapes, melons, pomegranates arranged in pyramids. Aulus could not restrain himself. He rushed towards the kitchen, impelled by that gluttony which was destined to surprise the universe.

Passing a cave, he saw stew-pans like cuirasses. Vitellius came to look at them, and demanded that the underground rooms of the fortress should be opened for him.

They were hewn in the rock, with high vaulted roofs, and pillars at intervals. The first contained old armour, but the second was filled to overflowing with pikes, all their points protruding from a bouquet of plumes. The third seemed to be hung with mats of reeds, the slender arrows were arranged so straightly side by side. Scimitar-blades covered the walls of the fourth. In the centre of the fifth, rows of helmets, with their crests, formed as it were a battalion of red serpents. In the sixth naught could be seen save quivers; in the seventh, naught but military boots; in the eighth, naught but armlets; in those following, pitchforks, grappling-irons, ladders, ropes, and even poles for catapults, even bells for the breastplates of dromedaries! And as the mountain grew larger at its base, and was hollowed out within like a beehive, beneath these rooms there were others more numerous and deeper.

Vitellius, Phineas his interpreter, and Sisenna, the leader of the publicans, walked through them by the light of torches borne by three eunuchs.

In the shadow they distinguished hideous objects invented by the barbarians: head-crushers studded with nails, javelins that poisoned the wounds they made, pincers resembling a crocodile's jaws; in a word, the Tetrarch had in store in Machærus munitions of war for forty thousand men.

He had gathered them in anticipation of an alliance of his enemies. But the Proconsul might believe, or say, that it

was to fight against the Romans, and the Tetrarch sought explanations.

They were not his; many were used for protection against brigands; moreover, they were needed against the Arabs; or else, they had all belonged to his father. And, instead of walking behind the Proconsul, he went before, at a rapid pace. Then he stood against the wall, which he covered with his toga, holding his elbows away from his sides; but the top of a door appeared above his head. Vitellius noticed it and wished to know what was on the other side.

The Babylonian alone could open it.

"Call the Babylonian!"

They awaited his coming.

His father had come from the shores of the Euphrates, to offer his services to Herod the Great, with four hundred horsemen, to defend the eastern frontier. After the partition of the kingdom, Jacim had remained in Philip's service, and now served Antipas.

He appeared, with a bow over his shoulder, a whip in his hand. Cords of many colours were tied tightly about his crooked legs. His huge arms emerged from a sleeveless tunic, and a fur cap cast its shadow over his face, which bore a beard curled in rings.

At first he seemed not to understand the interpreter. But Vitellius cast a glance at Antipas, who instantly repeated his command. Thereupon Jacim placed both his hands against the door. It glided into the wall.

A breath of hot air came forth from the darkness. A winding path sloped downward; they followed it and reached the extrance to a grotto, of greater extent than the other underground apartments.

At the rear there was an arched opening over the precipice, which defended the citadel on that side. The blossoms of a honeysuckle that clung to the wall hung downward in the bright light of day. Along the ground trickled a murmuring thread of water.

There were white horses there, a hundred perhaps, eating barley from a board on a level with their mouths. All had their manes painted blue, their hoofs in bags of esparto, and the hair between the ears curled over the frontal bone, like a wig. With their very long tails they lazily lashed their legs. The Proconsul was struck dumb with admiration.

They were marvellous creatures, supple as serpents, light as birds. They would keep pace with their rider's arrows, overturn men and bite them in the abdomen, traverse the mountainous country with ease, leap ravines, and continue their wild gallop over the level ground through a whole day. A word would stop them. As soon as Jacim entered, they went to him, like sheep when the shepherd appears; and, stretching out their necks, gazed at him restlessly with their child-like eyes. From habit, he uttered a hoarse cry from the bottom of his throat, which aroused their spirits; and they reared, hungry for space, begging leave to run.

Antipas, fearing that Vitellius might take them, had imprisoned them in that place, specially designed for animals in case of siege.

"It is a bad stable," said the Proconsul, "and you run the risk of losing them! Count them, Sisenna!"

The publican took a tablet from his girdle, counted the horses and wrote the number.

The agents of the fiscal companies bribed the provincial governors in order to pillage the provinces. This one smelt everywhere, with his polecat's jaw and his blinking eyes.

At last they went up again to the courtyard.

Bronze shields, set in the pavement here and there, covered the cisterns. He noticed one larger than the rest, which had not their sonority beneath the feet. He struck them all in turn, then shouted, stamping:

"I have it! I have it! Herod's treasure is here!"

The search for his treasure was a mania among the Romans.

It did not exist, the Tetrarch swore.

But what was there beneath?

"Nothing! a man, a prisoner."

"Show him to me!" said Vitellius.

The Tetrarch did not obey; the Jews would have learned his secret. His disinclination to raise the shield angered Vitellius.

"Break it in!" he shouted to the lictors.

Mannæus had divined what was happening. Seeing an axe, he thought that they were going to behead Iaokanann—and he stopped the lictor at the first blow on the bronze circle, inserted a sort of hook between it and the pavement, then, straightening his long, thin arms, slowly raised it; it opened, and all marvelled at the old man's strength. Beneath the wood-lined cover was a trap-door of the same dimensions. At a blow of the fist it folded in two panels; then they saw a hole, a great ditch, surrounded by a staircase without a rail; and they who leaned over the brink saw at the bottom something indistinct and horrifying.

A human being lay on the ground, covered with long hair that mingled with the beast's hair that clothed his back. He rose; his brow touched a horizontal grating; and from time to time he disappeared in the depths of his den.

The sun gleamed on the points of the tiaras and on the sword hilts, and heated the flagstones beyond measure; and doves, flying from the eaves, fluttered above the courtyard. It was the hour when Mannæus usually threw grain to them. He crouched before the Tetrarch, who stood beside Vitellius. The Galileans, the priests, the soldiers, formed a circle behind them; all held their peace, in agonizing suspense as to what was about to happen.

First there was a profound sigh, uttered in a cavernous voice.

Herodias heard it at the other end of the palace. Overcome by a sort of fascination, she passed through the crowd;

and with one hand on Mannæus's shoulder, and body bent forward, she listened.

The voice arose.

"Woe to you, Pharisees and Sadducees, generation of vipers, inflated skins, tinkling cymbals!"

They recognized Iaokanann. His name passed from mouth to mouth. Others hastened to the spot.

"Woe to you, O people! woe to the traitors of Judah, to the drunkards of Ephraim, to those who dwell in the fat valleys and who are overcome with wine!

"Let them fade away like the water that flows, like the snail that melts as it crawls, like the fœtus of a woman who does not see the sun.

"Thou must take refuge, O Moab, among the cypresses like the sparrows, in caverns like the jerboa. The gates of the fortresses shall be rent asunder more easily than nut-shells, walls shall crumble, cities shall burn; and the scourge of the Eternal shall not rest. He shall turn your limbs about in your blood as wool is turned in the dyer's vat. He shall tear you like a new harrow; He shall scatter morsels of your flesh upon the mountains!"

Of what conqueror was he speaking? Was it of Vitellius? The Romans alone could effect such an extermination. Complaints arose:

"Enough! enough! let him finish!"

He continued, in a louder voice:

"Beside their mothers' dead bodies, little children shall drag themselves through the dust. You shall go at night to seek bread among the ruins, at the risk of sword-thrusts. The jackals shall fight for your bones on the public squares, where the old men used to talk at evening. Your virgins, swallowing their tears, shall play the lute at the stranger's feasts, and your bravest sons shall bend their backs, crushed by too heavy burdens!"

The people remembered their days of exile, all the calamities of their history. These were the words of the prophets

of old. Iaokanann sent them forth, like mighty blows, one after another.

But the voice became sweet, melodious, musical. It proclaimed enfranchisement, splendid portents in the sky, the newly born, with an arm in the dragon's cavern, gold instead of clay, the desert blooming like a rose. "That which is now worth sixty talents will not cost an obol. Fountains of milk shall gush from the rocks; you shall sleep in the wine-presses, with full bellies!—When wilt Thou come, whose coming I await? In anticipation, all the peoples kneel, and Thy sway shall be eternal, O Son of David!"

The Tetrarch threw himself back, the existence of a Son of David affronting him like a threat.

Iaokanann anathematized him for his assumption of royalty:—"There is no king save the Eternal!"—and for his gardens, his statues, his ivory furniture—like the impious Ahab!

Antipas broke the cord of the seal that hung upon his breast, and threw it into the hole, bidding him hold his peace.

The voice replied:

"I will cry aloud like the bear, like a wild ass, like a woman in labour!

"The punishment has already befallen thee in thy incest. God afflicts thee with the sterility of the mule."

And laughter arose, like the plashing of the waves.

Vitellius persisted in remaining. The interpreter, in an unmoved voice, repeated in the Roman tongue all the invectives that Iaokanann roared in his own. The Tetrarch and Herodias were forced to listen to them twice. He panted, while she, open-mouthed, watched the bottom of the hole.

The ghastly man threw back his head, and, grasping the bars, pressed against them his face, which had the aspect of a tangled underbrush, and in which two coals of fire beamed.

"Ah! it is thou, Jezebel!

"Thou dost take his heart captive with the creaking of thy shoes. Thou didst neigh like a mare. Thou didst set thy bed on the mountains, to accomplish thy sacrifices!

"The Lord shall tear away thine earrings, thy purple robes, thy veils of fine linen, the circlets from thine arms, the rings from thy feet; and the little golden crescents that tremble on thy brow, thy silver mirrors, thy fans of ostrich feathers, the mother-of-pearl pattens that increase thy stature, the pride of thy diamonds, the perfumes of thy hair, the painting of thy nails—all the artifices of sensuality; and the stones shall be too few to stone the adulteress!"

She glanced about her for protection. The Pharisees hypocritically lowered their eyes. The Sadducees turned their faces away, fearing to offend the Proconsul. Antipas seemed at the point of death.

The voice grew louder, took on new intonations, rolled hither and thither with a crashing as of thunder, and, repeated by the mountain echoes, struck Machærus with bolt after bolt.

"Stretch thyself in the dust, daughter of Babylon! Grind flour! Remove thy girdle, unloose thy shoes, truss up thy skirts, cross the rivers! Thy shame shall be laid bare, thine opprobrium shall be seen! thy sobs shall break thy teeth! The Eternal abhors the stench of thy crimes! Accursed! accursed! Die like a dog!"

The trap-door closed, the cover was lowered to its place. Mannæus wished to strangle Iaokanann.

Herodias vanished. The Pharisees were scandalized. Antipas, in their midst, defended himself.

"Doubtless," said Eleazar, "one may marry his brother's wife; but Herodias was not widowed, and, moreover, she had a child, wherein lay the abomination."

"Not so! not so!" objected Jonathas the Sadducee. "The Law condemns such marriages, without proscribing them absolutely."

"It matters not! They are most unjust to me!" said

Antipas; "for Absalom lay with his father's wives, Judah with his daughter-in-law, Ammon with his sister, Lot with his daughters."

Aulus, who had been sleeping, reappeared at that moment. When he was informed of the affair, he took sides with the Tetrarch. He should not be disturbed by such foolish ideas; and he laughed aloud at the reprobation of the priests and the frenzy of Iaokanann.

Herodias, on the steps, turned towards him.

"You are wrong, my master! He bids the people refuse to pay the tax."

"Is that true?" instantly asked the publican.

The answers were generally in the affirmative. The Tetrarch confirmed them.

Vitellius thought the prisoner might fly; and, as Antipas's conduct seemed to him equivocal, he posted sentinels at the gates, along the walls, and in the courtyard.

Then he went to his apartment. The deputations of priests attended him.

Each one set forth his grievances, without broaching the question of the office of sacrificer.

One and all importuned him. He dismissed them.

Jonathas left him when he saw on the battlements Antipas talking with a man with long hair and in a white robe—an Essene; and he regretted having upheld him.

One thought afforded the Tetrarch consolation. Iaokanann was no longer at his disposal, the Romans had taken charge of him. What a relief! Phanuel was walking on the path around the battlements. He called him and said, pointing to the soldiers:

"They are stronger than I! I cannot set him free; it is not my fault!"

The courtyard was empty. The slaves were at rest. Against the reddening sky, flame-coloured on the horizon, the smallest perpendicular objects were outlined in black. Antipas distinguished the salt wells at the far end of the

Dead Sea, and he no longer saw the tents of the Arabs. Doubtless they had gone. The moon rose; a feeling of peace descended upon his heart.

Phanuel, overwhelmed, stood with his chin upon his breast. At last he made known what he had to say.

Since the beginning of the month he had studied the sky before dawn, the constellation Perseus being at the zenith. Agalah was hardly visible, Algol shone less brightly, Mira-Cœti had disappeared, whence he augured the death of a man of mark, that very night, in Machærus.

Who? Vitellius was too well guarded. Iaokanann would not be executed. "Then it is I!" thought the Tetrarch.

Perhaps the Arabs would return. The Proconsul might discover his relations with the Parthians! Hired assassins from Jerusalem escorted the priests; they had daggers under their garments, and the Tetrarch did not doubt Phanuel's learning.

He conceived the idea of having recourse to Herodias. He hated her, however. But she would give him courage, and all the bonds were not broken of the spell she had formerly cast upon him.

When he entered her chamber, cinnamon was smouldering in a bowl of porphyry; and powders, unguents, fabrics like clouds, embroideries lighter than feathers were scattered about.

He did not mention Phanuel's prediction, or his dread of the Jews and Arabs; she would have accused him of cowardice. He spoke of the Romans only. Vitellius had confided to him none of his military projects. He supposed him to be a friend of Caius, with whom Agrippa consorted, and he would be sent into exile, or perhaps he would be murdered.

Herodias, with indulgent contempt, tried to encourage him. At last she took from a small casket a curious medallion adorned with Tiberius's profile. That was enough to make the lictors turn pale and to base accusations upon.

Antipas, touched with gratitude, asked her how she had obtained it.

" It was given me," she replied.

Beneath a portière opposite, a bare arm protruded, a lovely, youthful arm, that might have been carved in ivory by Polycletus. Somewhat awkwardly, and yet with grace, it felt about in the air, trying to grasp a tunic left upon a stool near the wall.

An old woman silently passed it to her, pulling aside the curtain.

The Tetrarch remembered the face, but could not place it.

" Is that slave yours? "

" What matters it to you? " replied Herodias.

III

The guests filled the banquet hall.

It had three naves, like a basilica, separated by pillars of algum wood, with bronze capitals covered with carvings. Two galleries with openwork balustrades overhung it; and a third, in gold filigree, jutted out at one end, opposite an immense arch.

Candelabra burning on long tables extending the whole length of the hall formed bushes of fire, between cups of painted clay and copper platters, cubes of snow and heaps of grapes; but those red gleams one after another were lost in space because of the height of the ceiling, and points of light twinkled, like the stars at night, through the branches. Through the opening of the vast arch one could see torches on the terraces of the houses; for Antipas feasted his friends, his subjects, and all who had presented themselves.

Slaves, as active as dogs, and with their feet encased in sandals of felt, went to and fro, carrying salvers.

The proconsular table stood upon a platform built of sycamore boards, beneath the gilded tribune. Tapestries from Babylon enclosed it in a sort of pavilion.

Three ivory couches, one opposite the door and one on either side, held Vitellius, his son and Antipas; the Proconsul being next the door, at the left, Aulus at the right, the Tetrarch in the centre.

He wore a heavy black cloak, whose texture was invisible beneath layers of dyestuffs; he had paint on his cheek-bones, his beard trimmed like a fan, and azure powder on his hair, surmounted by a diadem of precious stones. Vitellius retained his purple baldric, which he wore diagonally over a linen tunic. Aulus had the sleeves of his robe of violet silk, shot with silver, tied at his back. The long spiral curls of his hair formed terraces, and a necklace of sapphires sparkled on his breast, which was as plumb and white as a woman's. Beside him, on a mat, with legs crossed, sat a very beautiful boy, who smiled incessantly. He had seen him in the kitchen, could not live without him, and having difficulty in remembering his Chaldean name, called him simply the "Asiatic." From time to time he stretched himself out on the triclinium. Then his bare feet overlooked the assemblage.

On one side there were the priests and officers of Antipas, people from Jerusalem, the chief men of the Greek cities; and, under the Proconsul, Marcellus with the publicans, friends of the Tetrarch, the notables of Cana, Ptolemais and Jericho; then, mingled pell-mell, mountaineers from Libanus and Herod's old soldiers (twelve Thracians, a Gaul, two Germans), gazelle hunters, Idumean shepherds, the Sultan of Palmyra, seamen of Eziongeber. Each person had before him a cake of soft dough, on which to wipe his fingers; and their arms, stretching out like vultures' necks, seized olives, pistachioes, and almonds. All the faces beamed with joy beneath crowns of flowers.

The Pharisees had spurned them as Roman wantonness. They shuddered when they were sprinkled with galburnum and incense, a compound reserved for the use of the Temple.

Aulus rubbed his armpits with it; and Antipas promised

him a whole cargo, with three bales of that genuine balsam which caused Cleopatra to covet Palestine.

A captain of his garrison at Tiberias, recently arrived, took his place behind him, to tell him of extraordinary events. But his attention was divided between the Proconsul and what was being said at the neighbouring tables.

The talk was of Iaokanann and men of his type; Simon of Gittoy purged sin with fire. A certain Jesus——

"The worst of all!" cried Eleazar. "An infamous juggler!"

Behind the Tetrarch a man arose, as pale as the hem of his chlamys. He descended from the platform and addressed the Pharisees:

"False! Jesus does miracles!"

Antipas would fain see one.

"You should have brought Him hither! Tell us."

Then he told that he, Jacob, having a daughter who was sick, had betaken himself to Capernaum, to implore the Master to heal her. The Master had replied: "Return to thy home, she is healed!"—and he had found her in the doorway, having left her bed when the hand of the dial marked three o'clock, the very moment when he had accosted Jesus.

Of course, argued the Pharisees, there are devices, powerful herbs! Sometimes, even there, at Machærus, one found the *baaras*, which made men invulnerable; but to cure without seeing or touching was an impossibility, unless Jesus employed demons.

And the friends of Antipas, the chief men of Galilee, repeated, shaking their heads:

"Demons, clearly."

Jacob, standing between their table and that of the priests, held his peace, with a haughty yet gentle bearing.

They called upon him to speak:—"Explain His power."

He bent his shoulders, and in an undertone, slowly, as if afraid of himself:

" Know you not that He is the Messiah? "

All the priests glanced at one another, and Vitellius inquired the meaning of the word. His interpreter waited a full minute before replying.

They called by that name a liberator who should bring to them the enjoyment of all their goods and power over all peoples. Some indeed maintained that two should be expected. The first would be vanquished by Gog and Magog, demons of the North; but the other would exterminate the Prince of Evil; and for ages they had expected His coming every minute.

The priests having taken counsel together, Eleazar spoke for them.

First, the Messiah would be a Son of David, not of a carpenter. He would confirm the Law; this Nazarene assailed it; and—a yet stronger argument—he was to be preceded by the coming of Elias.

Jacob retorted;

" But Elias has come! "

" Elias! Elias! " echoed the multitude, even to the farthest end of the hall.

All, in imagination, saw an old man beneath a flock of ravens, the lightning shining upon an altar, idolatrous pontiffs cast into raging torrents; and the women in the tribunes thought of the widow of Zarephath.

Jacob wearied himself repeating that he knew him! He had seen him! And so had the people!

" His name? "

Whereupon he shouted with all his strength:

" Iaokanann! "

Antipas fell backward as if stricken full in the chest. The Sadducees leaped upon Jacob. Eleazar harangued, seeking to obtain an audience.

When silence was restored, he folded his cloak about him and propounded questions, like a judge.

" Since the prophet is dead——"

Murmurs interrupted him. It was believed that Elias had disappeared only.

He angrily rebuked the multitude, and asked, continuing his inquiry:

"Think you that he has come to life again?"

"Why not?" said Jacob.

The Sadducees shrugged their shoulders; Jonathas, half closing his little eyes, forced himself to laugh, like a clown. Nothing could be more absurd than the claim of the body to life everlasting; and he declaimed, for the Proconsul's benefit, this line from a contemporary poet:

Nec crescit, nec post mortem durare videtur.

But Aulus was leaning over the edge of the triclinium, his forehead bathed in sweat, green of face, his hands on his stomach.

The Sadducees feigned deep emotion—on the morrow the office of sacrificer was restored to them; Antipas made parade of despair; Vitellius remained impassive. None the less his suffering was intense; with his son he would lose his fortune.

Aulus had not finished vomiting when he wished to eat again.

"Give me some marble dust, schist from Naxos, sea-water, no matter what! Suppose I should take a bath?"

He crunched snow; then, after hesitating between a Commagene stew and pink blackbirds, he decided upon gourds with honey. The Asiatic stared at him, that faculty of absorbing food denoting a prodigious being of a superior race.

Bulls' kidneys were served, also dormice, nightingales, and minced meat on vine leaves; and the priests disputed concerning the resurrection. Ammonius, pupil of Philo the Platonist, deemed them stupid, and said as much to Greeks who laughed at the oracles. Marcellus and Jacob had come together. The first described to the second the bliss he had felt during his baptism by Mithra, and Jacob urged him to follow Jesus. Wines made from the palm and

the tamarisk, wines of Safed and of Byblos, flowed from amphoræ into crateres, from crateres into drinking cups, from drinking cups down thirsty throats; there was much talk, and hearts overflowed. Jacim, although a Jew, did not conceal his adoration of the planets. A merchant of Aphaka stupefied the nomads by detailing the wonders of the Temple of Hierapolis: and they asked how much the pilgrimage would cost. Others clung to their native religion. A German, almost blind, sang a hymn in praise of that promontory of Scandinavia where the gods appeared with haloes about their faces; and men from Sichem refused to eat turtle-doves, from respect for the dove Azima.

Many talked, standing in the centre of the hall, and the vapour of their breaths, with the smoke of the candles, made a fog in the air. Phanuel passed along the wall. He had been studying the firmament anew, but he did not approach the Tetrarch, dreading the drops of oil, which, to the Essenes, were a great pollution.

Blows rang out against the gate of the castle.

It was known now that Iaokanann was held a prisoner there. Men with torches ascended the path; a black mass swarmed in the ravine; and they roared from time to time:

"Iaokanann! Iaokanann!"

"He disturbs everything!" said Jonathas.

"We shall have no money left if he continues!" added the Pharisees.

And recriminations arose:

"Protect us!"

"Let us make an end of him!"

"You abandon the religion!"

"Impious as the Herods!"

"Less so than you!" retorted Antipas. "It was my father who built your temple!"

Thereupon the Pharisees, the sons of the proscribed, the partisans of the Mattathiases, accused the Tetrarch of the crimes of his family.

They had pointed skulls, bristling beards, weak and evil hands, or flat noses, great round eyes, and the expression of a bulldog. A dozen or more, scribes and servants of the priests, fed upon the refuse of holocausts, rushed as far as the foot of the platform, and with knives threatened Antipas, who harangued them, while the Sadducees listlessly defended him. He spied Mannæus and motioned him to go, Vitellius signifying by his expression that these things did not concern him.

The Pharisees, remaining on their triclinia, worked themselves into a demoniacal frenzy. They broke the dishes before them. They had been served with the favourite stew of Mæcenas—wild ass—unclean meat.

Aulus mocked at them on the subject of the ass's head, which they held in honour, it was said, and indulged in other sarcasms concerning their antipathy for pork. Doubtless it was because that vulgar beast had killed their Bacchus; and they were too fond of wine, since a golden vine had been discovered in the Temple.

The priests did not understand his words. Phineas, by birth a Galilean, refused to translate them. Thereupon Aulus's wrath knew no bounds, the more as the Asiatic, seized with fright, had disappeared; and the repast failed to please him, the dishes being commonplace, not sufficiently disguised! He became calmer when he saw tails of Syrian sheep, which are bundles of fat.

The character of the Jews seemed hideous to Vitellius. Their god might well be Moloch, whose altars he had noticed along the road; and the sacrifices of children recurred to his mind, with the story of the man whom they were mysteriously fattening. His Latin heart rose in disgust at their intolerance, their iconoclastic frenzy, their brutish stagnation. The Proconsul wished to go, Aulus refused.

His robe fallen to his hips, he lay behind a heap of food, too replete to take more, but persisting in not leaving it.

The excitement of the people increased. They abandoned themselves to schemes of independence. They recalled the glory of Israel. All the conquerors had been punished: Antigonus, Crassus, Varus.

"Villains!" exclaimed the Proconsul; for he understood Syriac; his interpreter simply gave him time to compose his replies.

Antipas quickly drew the medallion of the Emperor, and, watching him tremblingly, held it with the image towards him.

Suddenly the panels of the golden tribune opened; and in the brilliant blaze of candles, between her slaves and festoons of anemone, Herodias appeared—on her head an Assyrian mitre held in place on her brow by a chin-piece; her hair fell in spiral curls over a scarlet peplum, slit along the sleeves. With two stone monsters, like those that guard the treasure of the Atrides, standing against the door, she resembled Cybele flanked by her lions; and from the balustrade above Antipas she cried, patera in hand:

"Long life to Cæsar!"

This homage was echoed by Vitellius, Antipas and the priests.

But there came to them from the lower end of the hall a hum of surprise and admiration. A young girl had entered.

Beneath a bluish veil that concealed her breast and her head could be seen her arched eyebrows, the sards at her ears, the whiteness of her skin. A square of variegated silk covered her shoulders and was secured about her hips by a golden girdle. Her black drawers were embroidered with mandrakes, and she tapped the floor indolently with tiny slippers of humming-birds' feathers.

When she reached the platform, she removed her veil. It was Herodias, as she was in her youth. Then she began to dance.

Her feet passed, one before the other, to the music of a

flute and a pair of crotala. Her rounded arms seemed to beckon someone, who always fled. She pursued him, lighter than a butterfly, like an inquisitive Psyche, like a wandering soul, and seemed on the point of flying away.

The funeral notes of the gingras succeeded the crotala. Prostration had followed hope. Her attitudes signified sighs, and her whole person a languor so intense that one knew not whether she was weeping for a god or dying of joy in his embrace. Her eyes half closed, she writhed and swayed with billowy undulations of the stomach; her bosoms quivered, her face remained impassive, and her feet did not stop.

Vitellius compared her to Mnester the pantomimist. Aulus was vomiting again. The Tetrarch lost himself in a dream and thought no more of Herodias. He fancied that he saw her near the Sadducees. The vision faded away.

It was not a vision. She had sent messengers, far from Machærus, to Salome her daughter, whom the Tetrarch loved; and it was an excellent scheme. She was sure of him now!

Then it was the frenzy of love that demanded to be satisfied. She danced like the priestesses of the Indies, like the Nubian girls of the Cataracts, like the Bacchantes of Lydia. She threw herself in all directions, like a flower beaten by the storm. The jewels in her ears leaped about, the silk on her back shone with a changing gleam; from her arms, from her feet, from her garments invisible sparks flashed and set men aflame. A harp sang; the multitude replied with loud applause. By stretching her legs apart, without bending her knees, she stooped so low that her chin touched the floor; and the nomads, accustomed to abstinence, the Roman soldiers, experts in debauchery, the miserly publicans, the old priests soured by disputes, all, distending their nostrils, quivered with desire.

Then she danced about Antipas's table, in a frenzy of excitement, like a witch's rhombus; and in a voice broken

by sobs of lust he said: "Come! come!" She danced on; the dulcimers rang out as if they would burst; the crowd roared. But the Tetrarch shouted louder than them all: "Come! come! thou shalt have Capernaum! the plain of Tiberias! my citadels! half of my kingdom!"

She threw herself on her hands, heels in the air, and thus circled the platform like a huge scarab, then stopped abruptly.

Her neck and her vertebræ were at right angles The coloured skirts that enveloped her legs, falling over her shoulders like a rainbow, framed her face a cubit from the floor. Her lips were painted, her eyebrows intensely black, her eyes almost terrible, and drops of sweat on her forehead resembled steam on white marble.

She did not speak. They gazed at each other.

There was a snapping of fingers in the tribune. She went thither, reappeared, and, lisping a little, uttered these words with an infantine air:

"I want you to give me, on a charger, the head——" She had forgotten the name, but she continued with a smile: "The head of Iaokanann!"

The Tetrarch sank back, overwhelmed.

He was bound by his word, and the people were waiting. But the death that had been predicted to him, should it befall another, might avert his own. If Iaokanann were really Elias, he could escape it; if he were not, the murder would be of no importance.

Mannæus was at his side and understood his purpose.

Vitellius recalled him to give him the countersign of the sentinels guarding the moat.

It was a relief. In a moment all would be over.

But Mannæus was hardly prompt in the execution of his functions.

He reappeared, but greatly perturbed.

For forty years he had filled the post of executioner. He it was who had drowned Aristobulus, strangled Alexander,

burned Mattathias alive, beheaded Zosimus, Pappus, Josephus, and Antipater, and he dared not kill Iaokanann! His teeth chattered, his whole body trembled.

He had seen in front of the hole the Great Angel of the Samaritans, all covered with eyes, and brandishing an enormous sword, red and jagged like a flame. Two soldiers brought forward as witnesses could confirm him.

They had seen nothing save a Jewish captain, who had rushed upon them and who had ceased to live.

The frantic rage of Herodias burst forth in a torrent of vulgar and murderous abuse. She broke her nails on the gilded grating of the tribune, and the two carved lions seemed to bite at her shoulders and to roar with her.

Antipas imitated her, so did the priests, the soldiers, the Pharisees, all demanding vengeance; and others indignant that their pleasure was delayed.

Mannæus went forth, hiding his face.

The guests found the time of waiting even longer than before. They were bored.

Suddenly the sound of footsteps echoed in the corridors. The suspense became intolerable.

The head entered; and Mannæus held it by the hair, at arm's length, proud of the applause.

When he had laid it on a charger, he offered it to Salome. She ran lightly up to the tribune; some moments later the head was brought back by the same old woman whom the Tetrarch had noticed that morning on the roof of a house, and later in Herodias's chamber.

He recoiled to avoid looking at it. Vitellius cast an indifferent glance upon it.

Mannæus went down from the platform and exhibited it to the Roman captains, then to all those who were eating in that part of the hall.

They examined it.

The sharp blade of the instrument, cutting downward, had touched the jaw. The corners of the mouth were drawn

aside convulsively. Blood, already clotted, studded the beard. The closed eyelids were of a leaden hue, like shells; and the candelabra all about shone upon it.

It reached the priests' table. A Pharisee turned it over curiously, and Mannæus, having turned it back again, placed it in front of Aulus, who was awakened by it. Through their partly opened lids the dead eyes and the lifeless eyes seemed to speak to each other.

Then Mannæus presented it to Antipas. Tears flowed down the Tetrarch's cheeks.

The torches were extinguished. The guests took their leave, and Antipas alone remained in the hall, his hands pressed against his temples, still gazing at the severed head; while Phanuel, standing in the centre of the great nave, muttered prayers with outstretched arms.

At the moment when the sun rose, two men, previously despatched by Iaokanann, returned with the long-awaited answer.

They confided it to Phanuel, who was enraptured by it.

Then he showed them the sorrowful object on the charger, amidst the remnants of the feast. One of the men said to him:

"Be comforted! He has gone down among the dead to announce the Christ's coming!"

The Essene understood now the words: "That He may grow great, I must needs shrink'"

And all three, having taken the head of Iaokanann, went forth in the direction of Galilee.

As it was very heavy, they carried it each in turn.

(III)

A SIMPLE HEART

(Translated by George Burnham Ives)

I

For half a century past the good folk of Pont-l'Évêque had envied Mme. Aubain her servant, Félicité. For a wage of a hundred francs a year she cooked and did all the work of the house, sewing, washing, ironing; she knew how to harness a horse, how to fatten up poultry, and how to make butter; moreover, she remained loyal to her mistress, and her mistress was not an amiable person.

Mme. Aubain had married a handsome fellow, without means, who had died at the beginning of the year 1809, leaving her with two very young children and a quantity of debts. She then sold what landed property she owned, with the exception of two farms, named Toucques and Geffosses, the rents of which brought her in at most five thousand francs a year; and she gave up her Saint Melaine house, and moved into another which was less expensive—one which belonged to her ancestors, and which was situated at the back of the market-place.

This house, roofed with slate, stood between a narrow alley and a lane which ended down by the riverside. Within there were differences of level that made one stumble. A narrow vestibule separated the kitchen from the sitting-room in which Mme. Aubain, seated near the window in a wicker armchair, spent the entire day. Eight mahogany chairs stood in line against the wainscoting, which was painted white. A pyramid of small wooden and pasteboard boxes was heaped up on an old piano, beneath a barometer. The yellow marble chimney-piece, style Louis XV, was flanked by two shepherdesses in tapestry. The clock in the centre represented a temple of Vesta. An atmosphere

of mustiness pervaded the room, which was on a lower level than the adjoining garden.

On the first floor you came at once upon Madame's bedroom, very large, a pale flower-design on its wall-paper, and for its chief decoration a portrait of "Monsieur" in dandified costume It communicated with a smaller room in which were to be seen two children's beds, without mattresses. Next came the drawing-room, always kept closed, and filled with furniture covered over with a dust-sheet. Beyond, a corridor led to a study; books and waste papers occupied the shelves of a book-case, the three sides of which embraced, as it were, a wide desk made of black wood. The opposite walls were almost covered with pen-drawings, water-colours, and l'Audran engravings—souvenirs of better times and vanished luxury. On the second floor was Félicité's room, lit by a dormer window which looked out over the fields.

Félicité rose at daybreak so as to be able to get to Mass, and worked on till the evening without interruption; then, dinner over, the plates and dishes cleared, and the door closed and bolted, she would smother the burning log in the ashes and drop off to sleep before the hearth, her rosary in her fingers. There was no better hand at a bargain than Félicité—nobody equalled her in determination. As for her trimness, the polish of her saucepans was the despair of other servants. Very economical, she ate her food slowly and gathered together the breadcrumbs on the table with her fingers—her loaf was baked specially for her, weighed twelve pounds, and lasted her twenty days.

At all times and all seasons she wore a cotton handkerchief over her shoulders, pinned at the back, a bonnet hiding her hair, grey stockings, red petticoat, and, over her bodice, an apron like those of hospital nurses.

Her face was thin and her voice sharp. At twenty-five people had taken her for forty. After she had reached fifty, she had ceased to show any signs of increasing age;

and, with her silent ways, her erect carriage and deliberate movements, she gave the impression of a woman made of wood, going through her work like an automaton.

II

Yet, like any other, Félicité had had her love story.

Her father, a stonemason, had been killed by a fall from a scaffolding. Then her mother died, her sisters dispersed, and a farmer took her into his service, setting her, while still a tiny child, to look after the cows in the pastures. She shivered with cold in her thin rags, quenched her thirst in pools—lying full length on the ground to drink—was beaten frequently for nothing, and finally was turned away for a theft of thirty sous, which she had not committed. Then she got into another farm, where she tended the poultry-yard, and where she gave so much satisfaction to her employers that the other servants became jealous of her

One evening in August (she was now eighteen) she was taken to the merry-making at Colleville. She was bewildered, stupefied almost, by the din of the fiddlers, by the dazzling lights hung from the trees, the medley of costumes, the wealth of lace and gold crosses, the immense concourse of people. She was holding timidly aloof when a young man, well-to-do in appearance, who had been smoking his pipe with his two elbows resting upon the pole of a cart, came up and asked her to dance. He treated her to some cider and to coffee, and bought her cakes and a silk handkerchief, and, supposing that she guessed what he had in mind, offered to see her home. As they were passing by a field of oats he threw her backwards roughly. She was frightened and began to scream. He took himself off.

Another evening, on the Beaumont road, as she was trying to hurry past a great waggon of hay which was progressing slowly in the same direction as herself, she recognized Theodore as she rubbed against the wheels.

He addressed her calmly, saying that she must forgive him everything, as it was " the fault of the drink."

She did not know what reply to make, and her impulse was to take flight.

He went on, however, at once to talk about the crops and about the notable folk of the Commune. It seemed that his father had quitted Colleville and had taken the farm at Écots, so that they were now neighbours. " Oh ! " said Félicité. He added that he was anxious to settle down. He was in no hurry, though, and could wait till he found a wife to his taste. She drooped her head. Then he asked her whether she had thought of marriage. She replied, smiling, that he ought not to make fun of her. " I'm not doing so, I swear I'm not," he rejoined, and he put his left arm round her waist; thus supported, she walked along. They slackened their pace. There was a gentle breeze, the stars were shining; in front of them the huge waggon oscillated from side to side, the four horses moving slowly, raising a cloud of dust. Presently, of their own accord, they took a turning to the right. He kissed her once again, and she made off into the darkness.

Next week Theodore got her to meet him.

They met in yard corners, behind walls, under isolated trees. She had not the innocence of young ladies of her age—the ways of animals had been an education to her; but commonsense and the instinct of self-respect safeguarded her virtue. Her resistance so stimulated Theodore's desires that to compass them (perhaps, indeed, ingenuously) he asked her to marry him. She was distrustful at first, but he gave her his word.

Soon, however, he communicated a disturbing piece of news. His parents had bought him a substitute the year previously, but now at any moment he was liable to conscription, and the idea of having to serve in the army frightened him. This cowardice, in Félicité's eyes, was evidence of his devotion to her, and she became increasingly

devoted to him. She began to meet him at night, and while they were together Theodore tortured her with his fears and his entreaties.

At last he declared one evening that he would go himself to the Prefecture to make definite inquiries, and that he would come back with his news on the following Sunday between eleven o'clock and midnight.

When the time came Félicité hastened to meet him.

In his place she found one of his friends. He told her that she would not see Theodore again. In order to escape the conscription he had married a very rich old woman, Mme. Lehouassais, of Toucques.

A fit of passionate grief ensued. Félicité threw herself down on the ground, uttering cries of misery and appeals to God. She lay there all alone in the field, weeping and moaning until sunrise. Then she returned to the farm and announced her intention of leaving it; and at the end of the month, having received her wages, she tied up all her belongings in a handkerchief and made her way to Pont-l'Évêque. In front of the inn, she accosted a dame wearing widow's weeds, who happened at that very time to be on the look-out for a cook. The young girl clearly did not know much, but she seemed so willing and so easily pleased that Mme. Aubain ended by saying: "Good. I engage you." Half an hour later Félicité was installed in her new situation.

At first she lived there in a state of nervousness caused by the style of the house and the memories of "Monsieur" by which it seemed to be pervaded. Paul and Virginie, aged respectively seven and barely four, seemed to her beings of a finer clay; she would let them ride upon her back; Mme. Aubain mortified her by telling her not to keep kissing them every minute. She was happy, however Her sorrow melted away in these pleasant surroundings.

Every Thursday certain friends of Mme. Aubain's came to play a game of "Boston." Félicité had to get ready the

cards and the foot-warmers. The guests arrived exactly at eight o'clock, and took their departure before the stroke of eleven.

Every Monday morning the curio-dealer who lived down the street spread out his wares on the ground in front. And on that day the whole town was filled with a babel of sounds, horses neighing, sheep bleating, pigs grunting—all these noises mingling with the sharp clattering of the carts in the streets. Towards midday, when the market was at its height, a tall old peasant with a hooked nose, his cap on the back of his head, would present himself at the hall door—this was Robelin, the tenant of the Geffosses farm. Shortly afterwards, Liébard, the Toucques farmer, would appear, short and fat and ruddy, wearing a grey coat and gaiters with spurs attached to them.

They both had fowls and cheeses to offer to Mme. Aubain. Félicité was always more than a match for them in guile, and they went off much impressed by her astuteness.

At irregular intervals, Mme. Aubain received a visit from the Marquis de Gremanville, one of her uncles, a broken-down rake who lived now at Falaise on the last remnant of his estate. He always made his appearance at lunch-time, accompanied by a hideous poodle whose paws left dirty tracks upon all the furniture. Despite his efforts to maintain the air of a gentleman of noble birth (he would, for instance, lift his hat every time he uttered the words "my late father"), he had acquired the habit of filling himself glass after glass and giving forth questionable stories. Félicité would put him out of the house quite politely. "You have had enough, Monsieur de Gremanville! You must come again another time!" she would say, and shut the door on him.

To M. Bourais, a retired lawyer, Félicité would open the door with pleasure. His white cravat, his bald head, his shirt-frills, his ample brown frock-coat, his way of curving his arm when he took a pinch of snuff—in fact, his whole

personality produced in her that slight feeling of excitement which we experience at the sight of men of mark. As he looked after Madame's property, he would be shut up in Monsieur's Sanctum with her for hours at a time; he was cautious always not to commit himself, had a boundless reverence for the magistracy, and was by way of being something of a Latin scholar.

With a view to imparting a little instruction to the children in an agreeable fashion, he presented them with a series of geographical prints which included representations of scenes in different parts of the world—cannibals with head-dresses of feathers, an ape carrying off a young lady, Bedouin Arabs in the desert, the harpooning of a whale, etc.

Paul explained these pictures to Félicité. This, in fact, was her sole literary education. That of the children was undertaken by Guyot, a poor wretch employed at the Mairie, famous for his beautiful penmanship and for the way he sharpened his penknife on his boot.

In fine weather they went off at an early hour to the Geffosses farm. The farmyard is on a slope, with the house in the middle; in the distance is the sea, looking like a spot of grey.

Félicité would take some slices of cold meat out of her basket, and they would all sit down to their *déjeuner* in a room forming part of the dairy. It was all that was left of a pleasure-house now disappeared. The wall-paper, falling into shreds, shook as the wind blew through the room. Mme. Aubain leaned forward, a victim to sad memories; the children did not dare to speak. "Why don't you go and play?" she would say to them, and they would run off.

Paul climbed up into the loft, caught birds, played ducks and drakes with flat stones upon the pond, or tapped with a stick the rows of big barrels which sounded like so many drums.

Virginie fed the rabbits, or went to pick cornflowers, her

legs moving so quickly that you caught glimpses of her little embroidered drawers.

One evening in autumn they were going back by the cornfields. The moon in its first quarter lit up a portion of the sky, and a mist hung like a cloud over the winding course of the Toucques. Oxen, lying in the meadows, gazed tranquilly at the four passers-by. In the third field, some got up and formed round them in a circle.

"Don't be afraid," said Félicité, and making a soothing kind of noise with her mouth she stroked the back of the animal nearest to her, on which it turned right round and went off followed by others. But the little party had scarcely traversed the adjoining meadow when they heard a fierce bellowing. It was a bull, invisible till then by reason of the mist. He advanced towards the two women. Mme. Aubain began to run. "No! no! don't go so fast!" cried Félicité; they hurried none the less and heard loud snorts closer and closer behind them. His hoofs had begun to beat the ground like strokes of a hammer—he was coming down upon them full gallop! Félicité turned round, and snatching up handfuls of earth threw them into the animal's eyes. He lowered his head, shook his horns, and stood trembling with fury, bellowing terribly. Mme. Aubain had by now reached the end of the field with her children, and was making desperate efforts to climb up the high bank. Félicité backed away slowly from the bull, and continued to throw bits of earth into his eyes. She kept calling out to the others, "Be quick! be quick!"

Mme. Aubain got down into the ditch, pushing Virginie and Paul before her, but fell several times while struggling to climb up the other side, which she pluckily achieved.

The bull had forced Félicité back against some palings. Flakes of foam from his mouth splashed her face, and in another second he would have ripped her up. She had just time to slip between two bars, and the huge animal pulled up short quite astonished.

This event was a subject of conversation at Pont-l'Évêque for many years. Félicité herself, however, took no pride in it, having no notion that she had achieved anything heroic. Virginie monopolized her attention, for, as a result of the shock, the child had contracted a nervous affection, and M. Pourpart, the doctor, had recommended sea-baths for her at Trouville.

Trouville was not a fashionable watering-place in those days. Mme. Aubain made inquiries about it, and consulted Bourais, making preparations as though for a long journey.

Her luggage was sent on ahead, on the eve of her departure, in a cart of Liébard's. Next day he himself brought round two horses, one provided with a lady's saddle covered with velvet, the other with a cloak rolled up to form a seat. Mme. Aubain got up on one of them, behind Liébard, while Félicité mounted the other with Virginie under her charge, and Paul rode a donkey lent by M. Lechaptois on the express understanding that great care was to be taken of it.

The road was so bad that two hours were taken to compass its eight kilometres. The horses sank in the mud down to their pasterns, and had to make violent movements with their haunches to extricate themselves; now they had to struggle with deep ruts, now clamber over obstacles. Now and again Liébard's mare would come to a standstill. He waited patiently until she decided to go ahead again, and he held forth upon the people whose estates bordered the road and indulged in moral reflections upon their history. Thus in the centre of Toucques, while passing under windows full of geraniums, he began with a shrug of his shoulders, "There's a Mme. Lehouassais, who instead of taking a young man. . . ." Félicité did not catch the rest of the remark; the horses broke into a trot, the ass into a gallop; they now went down a narrow path single file, a gateway was opened to them, two boys made their appearance, and all dismounted in front of a dung-heap on the very threshold.

Old " Mère " Liébard on seeing her mistress indulged in warm expressions of delight. She served a *déjeuner* consisting of a sirloin, tripe, black pudding, a fricassee of fowl, sparkling cider, a jam tart, and prunes served in brandy—all to a running accompaniment of compliments to Madame herself who seemed " in the best of health," to Mademoiselle who looked " magnificent," to M. Paul " grown so big and strong," and inquiries after their deceased grandparents whom the Liébards had known, having been in the service of the family for several generations. The farm, like its occupiers, bore the appearance of age. The beams across the ceiling were worm-eaten, the walls blackened with smoke, the tiles grey with dust. An oak cupboard was covered with all sorts of utensils, jugs, plates, tin porringers, wolf-traps, sheep clippers; a huge squirt amused the children. In the three adjoining yards there was not a tree but had mushrooms growing at its base, and tufts of mistletoe sprouting among its branches. The wind had blown down some of them. They had sprouted again, and all were weighed down by their quantity of apples. The thatched roofs of the outhouses, looking like brown velvet and of unequal thickness, withstood the most violent gusts of wind, but the carthouse lay in ruins. Mme. Aubain declared she would have it seen to, and gave orders for the horses to be reharnessed.

Another half-hour elapsed before they reached Trouville. The little caravan dismounted to pass the Ecores, a cliff beneath which boats were moored, and three minutes later, at the end of the quay, they made their way into the courtyard of the " Golden Lamb," kept by " Mère " David.

Virginie began from the very first to feel less weak—the result of the change of air and the action of the baths. She went into the water in her chemise, having no bathing dress, and her nurse dressed her in a custom-house shed which was placed at the disposal of the bathers.

In the afternoon they went with the donkey beyond the

Roches Noires, Hennequeville way. The path rose, at first, through a countryside undulating like the greensward of a park, then came to an upland in which meadows alternated with ploughed fields. To either side of the road holly-bushes stood up from among the tangle of briars; while here and there a great lifeless tree made a zigzag pattern against the blue sky with its bare branches.

They nearly always had a rest when they reached a certain meadow, whence they could see Deauville to the left, Havre to the right, and the open sea in front of them. The sea flashed in the sunlight, its surface smooth as a mirror, and so calm that you could scarcely hear its murmuring; sparrows twittered out of sight; the immense vault of the heavens was over all. Mme. Aubain, sitting on the ground, busied herself with her sewing; Virginie, beside her, plaited reeds; Félicité weeded out sprigs of lavender; Paul found it dull and was restless to be off.

On other occasions they would cross over the Toucques by boat and go looking for shells. At low tide they would find sea-urchins, anemones and jelly-fish; and the children would run to catch the flakes of foam carried by the breeze. The tranquil waves, breaking upon the sands, unrolled themselves along the entire length of the beach; the beach stretched out as far as you could see, but to landward it ended in the dunes which divided it from the Marais—a wide extent of meadow-land shaped like a hippodrome When they returned that way they saw Trouville at the foot of the hillside. At each step they took the town seemed to grow bigger and to spread itself out, with all its multiform dwellings, in gay disorder.

On days when the weather was too hot they did not leave their sitting-room. The dazzling radiance outside formed golden bars of light between the shutters of the Venetian blinds. Not a sound was to be heard in the village. Not a soul stirred in the street below. This pervading silence intensified their sense of restfulness. In the distance the

hammers of caulkers beat upon keels and the smell of tar was wafted upwards on the heavy air.

Their principal amusement was found in the return of ships to port. As soon as the vessels had passed the buoys they began to tack. They came in, topsails down, their foresails swelling like balloons; they glided along through the chopping waves until they were in the middle of the harbour, when the anchor was suddenly dropped. Finally, the vessel came alongside the quay. The sailors threw out their harvest of fish still palpitating and alive; a long line of carts stood in readiness, and a crowd of women wearing cotton bonnets rushed forward to fill their baskets and give their men a welcome.

One day one of these women went up to Félicité, who a few minutes later re-entered the family sitting-room with her face beaming. She had found a sister; and Nastasie Barette, by marriage Leroux, presented herself, carrying a baby at her breast, while at her right hand was another young child, and at her left a small cabin-boy, with his fists doubled on his hips and his sailor's cap cocked over one ear.

At the end of a quarter of an hour Mme. Aubain signified to her that it was time to go.

They were to be met continually outside the kitchen or on their walks. The husband did not show himself.

Félicité grew fond of them. She bought them a blanket, some shirts, and a stove; it was evident that they were taking advantage of her. This weakness exasperated Mme. Aubain, who, moreover, resented the familiar way in which the boy addressed Paul; and as Virginie had begun to cough and the weather was no longer good, she decided on a return to Pont l'Évêque.

M. Bourais helped her to choose a college for Paul. That of Caen was considered to be the best, and thither he was sent. He went bravely through with his leave-taking, content to go and live in a house where he was to have companions.

Mme. Aubain resigned herself to the parting from her son because it was absolutely necessary. Virginie missed him less and less, Félicité felt the loss of his noisy ways. A new occupation, however, served to distract her thoughts. After Christmas it became one of her duties to take the little girl to have her catechism lesson every day.

III

Having made a genuflexion at the door of the church, Félicité advanced along the lofty nave between two rows of chairs, opened Mme. Aubain's pew, sat down and allowed her gaze to travel all round her.

Boys to the right, girls to the left, occupied the choir stalls; the curé remained standing by the lectern; a stained-glass window in the apse represented the Holy Ghost overshadowing the Blessed Virgin; another showed her on her knees before the Infant Jesus; and behind the tabernacle there was a wood carving of St. Michael demolishing the dragon.

The priest began with an outline of sacred history. Félicité formed pictures in her mind of Paradise, the Deluge, the Tower of Babel, cities in flames, concourses of people being annihilated, idols being shattered, and these bewildering visions filled her with awe of the Almighty and terror of His wrath. The story of the Passion moved her to tears. Why had Jesus been crucified—He who had cherished little children, who had given food to the multitude, who had cured the blind, and who had chosen, out of love and kindness, to be born in the midst of the poor, in a stable? The seed-times, the harvest-times, the pressing of the grapes, these and all other familiar things spoken of in the Gospel belonged to her life; the coming of the Saviour sanctified them; and she began to love lambs more tenderly for love of the Lamb, doves because of the Holy Ghost. She found it difficult to imagine his Person, for he was not only a bird,

but also a flame, and at other times a breath. Perhaps it was his light that flew hither and thither at night by the borders of the marshes, his breath that moved the clouds, his voice that lent harmony to the bells? She remained lost in these moods of adoration, taking pleasure also in the freshness of the walls of the church and its atmosphere of peace.

As for the dogmas, she understood nothing of them, made no effort to understand them. The curé discoursed, the children repeated what they had learnt; presently she fell asleep, waking suddenly when they all got up to go and their sabots began to clatter on the flag-stones.

It was in this fashion that she learnt her catechism, hearing it repeated out loud, her religious education having been neglected in her youth, and henceforward she imitated all Virginie's practices, fasting like her and going to confession. On the festival of Corpus Christi they erected a small altar together.

Virginie's first communion was a matter for great consideration to her for many days in advance. She busied herself over the necessary shoes, the rosary beads, the prayer-book and gloves. How her hands trembled as she helped Mme. Aubain to dress her!

Throughout the Mass she endured an agony of nervousness. M. Bourais prevented her from seeing one side of the choir, but immediately in front of her the little troop of maidens, adorned with white crowns above their drooping veils, looked to her like a field of snow; and she recognized her little dear one from afar by her peculiarly slender neck and her devout bearing. The bell rang, the heads bent forward; there was a silence. Then the organ pealed out, and the choristers and the whole congregation sang the "Agnus Dei"; after which the boys moved out of their seats in single file, the girls following. Slowly, with hands joined, they progressed towards the brilliantly lit altar, knelt down upon the first step, received the Sacrament one

by one, and returned to their places in the same order. When Virginie's turn came Félicité leant forward to watch her, and in imagination, as happens in such cases of true devotion, she felt as though she herself were this child—Virginie's face had become her own, Virginie's dress clothed her, Virginie's heart was beating in her bosom—when the moment came to open the mouth, with eyelids lowered, she all but fainted.

Next day, early in the morning, Félicité presented herself at the Sacristy and asked M. le Curé to give her communion. She received it devoutly but not with the same rapture.

Mme. Aubain was anxious to make an accomplished person of her daughter, and as Guyot could teach her neither English nor music, she determined to send her as a boarder to the Ursuline Convent at Honfleur.

Virginie raised no objection. Félicité sighed, and it seemed to her that Mme. Aubain was unfeeling. Afterwards she reflected that perhaps her mistress was well advised. These things were beyond the scope of her own judgment.

At last an old convent van stopped one day in front of the house, and there stepped out of it one of the nuns who was come to fetch "Mademoiselle." Félicité placed Virginie's luggage on the roof of the conveyance, imparted some instructions to the driver, and put in the box under the driver's seat six pots of jam, a dozen pears, and a bouquet of violets.

At the last moment Virginie burst into tears; she embraced her mother, who kissed her on the forehead, bidding her to be brave. The steps were raised and the vehicle started.

Then Mme. Aubain broke down; in the evening all her friends, the Lormeau household, Mme. Lechaptois, "those" Rochefeuille women. M. de Houppeville and Bourais looked in to console her.

The loss of her daughter was a great grief to her at first. But three times a week she had a letter from her, and on the

other days she wrote to her, walked about in the garden or read, and in this way succeeded in passing the time.

From force of habit Félicité continued to enter Virginie's bedroom every morning and looked all round it. It saddened her that she no longer had her hair to comb, her boots to lace, herself to tuck up in bed—that she no longer had her pretty little face to gaze upon or her hand to hold out walking. Feeling the want of occupation, she tried her hand at making lace, but her fingers were too clumsy and she broke the threads; she seemed to herself no good at anything, she became unable to sleep—as she put it herself, she was simply worn out.

To distract her mind, she asked permission to have her nephew Victor to visit her.

He arrived on Sunday after Mass, his cheeks glowing, his breast uncovered, odorous of the country which he had crossed. Félicité had a meal ready for him at once. They sat down to it face to face, and Félicité, eating as little as possible herself from motives of economy, so stuffed him up that at last he fell asleep. When the bells began to peal for Vespers she woke him, brushed his trousers, tied his bow, and went off to church with him, leaning on his arm with a kind of maternal pride.

His parents made him bring something home always from these visits; it might be a packet of brown sugar or of soap, or some brandy—sometimes it would be money. And he would leave Félicité his clothes to mend—a task she enjoyed especially because it meant that he had to come back to get them again.

In August his father took him off on a cruise along the coast.

It was holiday time. The arrival of the children consoled Félicité. But Paul had become capricious, and Virginie had grown too old to be addressed in the accustomed familiar way, and this produced a feeling of awkwardness, raised a barrier between them.

Victor sailed first to Morlaix, then to Dunkirk, then to Brighton; on his return from each trip he brought Félicité a present. On the first occasion it was a box of contrived shells; nest time it was a coffee-cup; the time after a great figure of a man made of gingerbread. The boy was improving in appearance, he was growing into quite a fine fellow; a moustache began to make its appearance, and there was a frank look in his eyes. He wore a little leather hat on the back of his head like a pilot. It amused Félicité to listen to him telling his yarns full of sailor's lingo.

On Monday, July 14, 1819 (she never forgot the date), Victor announced to her that he had signed on for a long voyage, and that on the night of the following day he would have to go away on the Honfleur packet-boat to rejoin his ship, and which was shortly to put in at Havre. It was possible that he might be away two years.

The prospect of so long a separation went to Félicité's heart; and, to say good-bye to him again, on the Wednesday evening, after Madame had dined, she put on her goloshes and trudged the twelve miles between Pont-l'Évêque and Honfleur.

On arriving at the Calvary, instead of turning to the left she went to the right, and getting lost among the ship-builders' yards she had to retrace her steps; some people of whom she asked the way warned her that she must hurry up. She made her way round the harbour, which was full of ships, stumbling against ropes as she hastened along; then the ground sloped down to the water's edge, there was a confusion of lights, and she thought she must have lost her senses, for she saw horses in the sky.

On the edge of the quay other horses were neighing, frightened at the sea. A crane was lifting them up and lowering them into a vessel, on the decks of which people were shoving their way between barrels of cider, hampers full of cheeses, and sacks of grain; hens were to be heard clucking, and the captain swearing, and a cabin-boy was

leaning over the cathead, regardless of all this. Félicité who had not recognized him, called out "Victor." He raised his head; she rushed up, but they suddenly drew back the gangway.

The packet-boat, towed at first by a number of women, cheering, moved out of the port. Her timbers creaked, the heavy waves beat against her prow. Her sail had flapped round and nobody on board could now be seen. Soon nothing was visible upon the sea, silvered by the moon, but a black spot, which gradually grew less distinct, then sank and disappeared.

Félicité, passing close by the Calvary, wished to commend to God him whom she held nearest to her heart; and she stood there a long time praying, her face bathed in tears, her eyes turned towards the clouds. The town lay sleeping, the custom-house officials alone were moving about; there was the sound of water flowing unceasingly like a torrent through the holes in the lock gates. Two o'clock struck.

The convent would not be open until the morning. Mme. Aubain would be annoyed if she were delayed; and, in spite of her desire to see the other child, she went back. The girls at the inn were getting up when she reached Pont-l'Évêque.

For months and months to come that poor boy was to toss about on the waters of the deep. His cruises until then had given her no uneasiness. You might count on coming back safe from Brittany or from England; but America, the Colonies, the East Indies—these places were in dubious regions, at the other end of the world.

Henceforth all Félicité's thoughts were for her nephew. On sunny days she imagined him suffering from thirst; when it was stormy she dreaded the lightning for him. When she heard the wind shrieking down the chimney or blowing slates down from the roof, she saw him battered by this very tempest, on the top of a broken mast, drenched in foam. At another time—her imagination helped by

those geographical pictures—she thought of him being eaten by savages, or in the grip of apes in a forest, or perishing on some desert shore. And she never spoke of these anxieties.

Mme. Aubain meanwhile experienced anxieties of another kind concerning her daughter. The good Sisters reported that she was an affectionate child, but delicate.

The least excitement upset her. They found it necessary to give up teaching her the piano.

Mme. Aubain expected the letters from the convent to come to her with fixed regularity. One morning when there was no post she became very impatient. She kept walking up and down the room from her armchair to the window. Really it was too extraordinary! Four whole days and no news!

To console her, Félicité remarked: "It is six months, Madame, since I have heard any news."

"News from whom?"

Félicité replied quite gently: "Why—from my nephew!"

"Oh! Your nephew!" And Madame Aubain, shrugging her shoulders, went on walking up and down, as much as to say, "You don't suppose I was thinking of him? He is nothing to me! A cabin-boy, a little ragamuffin like that! The idea! It is my daughter I am talking about! Think a moment!"

Félicité, though hardened to rudeness by this time, took the affront to heart but presently forgot it. It seemed to her natural enough to lose one's head over the little girl. The two children were of equal importance in her eyes—they shared her heart, and their destinies were to be the same.

The chemist told her that Victor's ship had arrived at Havana. He had seen this item of news in a Gazette.

On account of the cigars, Félicité imagined Havana to be a country in which people did nothing but smoke, and Victor went about among the negroes in a cloud of tobacco.

Would it be possible, "in case of need," to return from Havana by land? How far was it from Pont-l'Évêque? To find this out, she put the questions to M. Bourais.

He got out his atlas, and entered upon explanations of longitudes and latitudes, and he smiled a very superior smile as he noted the dumbfounded expression on her face. He ended by pointing out to her a small black spot, barely perceptible, somewhere in the irregular outline of an oval section in the map. "Here it is," he said. She leaned over the map, but the network of coloured lines merely tried her eyes and told her nothing; and on Bourais asking her to say what it was that puzzled her, she begged him to point out to her the house in which Victor was staying. Bourais lifted up his arms, roaring with laughter—such simplicity delighted him; but Félicité had no notion what had amused him—how should she, inasmuch as she very likely expected to see even her nephew's portrait in the map, within such narrow limits did her intelligence work?

It was fifteen days after this that Liébard entered the kitchen, at market-time as usual, and handed her a letter from her brother-in-law. As neither of them could read it, she had recourse to her mistress.

Mme. Aubain, who was counting the stitches of her knitting work, now put that aside, broke the seal of the letter, trembled, and said in a deep voice, a grave look in her eyes:

"This is to give you news of a calamity . . . your nephew——"

He was dead. That was all the letter told.

Félicité sank into a chair, and, leaning her head on the back of it, closed her eyes, which became suddenly red. Then bending forward, her eyes fixed, her hands drooping idly, she kept saying over and over again: "Poor little fellow! Poor little fellow!"

Liébard, sighing, stood watching her. Mme. Aubain still trembled slightly. She suggested to Félicité that she should go and visit her sister at Trouville.

Félicité signified by a gesture that she felt no need to do so.

There was a silence. Liébard thought it tactful for him to withdraw.

Then Félicité exclaimed, "It means nothing to them." Her head fell forward again; mechanically from time to time she lifted the long knitting-needles upon the work-table.

Some women passed into the yard with a cart from which odds and ends of linen kept falling out. Seeing them through the window, Félicité remembered her washing. Having soaked the things the day before, she had to wring them out to-day; she got up and left the room.

Her tub and her board were down by the Toucques. She threw a heap of underlinen down on the river bank, rolled up her sleeves and took her bat in hand; the vigorous blows she dealt with it could be heard in the neighbouring gardens. The meadows were empty, the wind ruffled the surface of the stream; lower down, tall grasses leant over its sides, looking like the hair of corpses floating in the water. Félicité restrained her feelings and was very brave until the evening; but in her own room she gave way to her sorrow and lay prostrate on the mattress, her face buried in the pillow, her hands clenched against her temples.

A good deal later she learnt particulars as to Victor's death from the captain of the vessel. The boy had been bled to excess at the hospital for yellow fever. Four doctors had him in hand at the same time. He died immediately, and the principal doctor remarked: "Good, one more!"

Victor's parents had always treated him brutally. Félicité preferred to see no more of them; and they for their part made no advance to her, either because they forgot all about her, or because of the callousness that comes from penury.

Virginie meanwhile was losing strength. A weight on her chest, coughing, continued feverishness, and her flushed cheeks pointed to some deep-seated malady. M. Pourpart

had recommended a stay in Provence. Mme. Aubain decided upon this, and she would have had her daughter back home again at once were it not for the climate of Pont-l'Évêque.

She made an arrangement with a man who let out carriages on hire, which enabled her to visit the convent every Tuesday. There was in the garden a terrace from which a glimpse could be caught of the Seine. Virginie would walk up and down here over the vine-leaves fallen on the ground, leaning on her mother's arm. Sometimes the sun, breaking through the clouds, forced her to lower her eyes, as she gazed upon the distant sails and along the entire horizon from the Château of Tancarville to the lighthouses at Havre. Afterwards they would have a rest in an arbour. Mme. Aubain had provided herself with a small cask of excellent Malaga; and, laughing at the idea of its possibly making her tipsy, Virginie would drink two thimblefuls, never more.

The girl's strength seemed to be coming back to her. The autumn passed smoothly. Félicité reassured Mme. Aubain. But one evening when she had been for a walk outside the town she found M. Pourpart's carriage outside the door on her return; and he himself was in the hall. Mme. Aubain was putting on her hat.

"Give me my foot-warmer, and my purse and gloves," she cried out. "Hurry up about it."

Virginie was suffering from inflammation of the lungs; perhaps it was already a hopeless case.

"Not yet!" said the doctor; and he and Mme. Aubain stepped into the vehicle, beneath the whirling snowflakes. Night was approaching and the weather was very cold.

Félicité rushed off to the church to light a candle. Then she ran after the carriage, which she caught up an hour later and jumped nimbly up behind, holding on to the hangings until suddenly the reflection came to her, "The yard was not closed. Suppose thieves found their way in!" and she got down.

First thing next day she presented herself at the doctor's. He had come back home, but had gone off again into the country. Then she stopped at the inn, thinking perhaps a letter might be brought thither by some stranger. Finally, towards dusk, she took the diligence for Lisieux.

The convent was situated at the bottom of a steep lane. Half-way down it, she heard strange sounds—a death-knell. "It must be for others," she thought; and knocked vigorously at the convent door.

After several minutes she could hear the shuffling of shoes; the door was half opened and a nun appeared.

The good Sister, with a compassionate look, said that Virginie "had just passed away." At the same moment the knell of Saint Leonard was renewed.

Félicité made her way up to the second floor.

From the door she saw Virginie lying outstretched upon the bed, her hands clasped together, her mouth open, her head poised slightly backwards beneath a black cross leaning over her, between the motionless curtains, less white than her face. Mme. Aubain, clinging to the foot of the bed, gave out sobs of agony. The Mother Superior was standing to the right. Three candlesticks upon the chest of drawers made spots of red, and the fog spread a white mist over the windows. Some nuns led Mme. Aubain away.

For two nights Félicité did not leave the dead girl. She repeated the same prayers over and over again, throwing holy water over the sheets, and sitting down to gaze upon her. At the end of the first watch she noticed that the face had taken on a yellowish tint, the lips had become blue, the nose was thinner, the eyes were sinking in. She kissed them several times, and it would not have surprised her beyond measure had Virginie opened them again; for such souls the supernatural is quite simple. She dressed the body, wrapped it in the shroud, and laid it in the coffin, placed a wreath on her, and spread her hair. It was fair and extraordinarily long for her age. Félicité cut off a

big lock of it and put half of it into her bosom, resolved never to part with it.

The corpse was taken back to Pont-l'Évêque, according to the wishes of Mme. Aubain, who followed the hearse in a closed carriage.

After the Mass, it took the funeral cortège three-quarters of an hour to reach the cemetery. Paul walked at its head, sobbing. M. Bourais followed, and then the principal inhabitants of the village, the women wearing black cloaks, Félicité among them. Her thoughts went back to her nephew, and not having been able to render him these tokens of regard, she felt her sadness intensified—as if he also was being taken to the grave.

Mme. Aubain's despair was boundless. At first she revolted against God, accusing Him of injustice in robbing her of her child when she had never done any harm, and her conscience was so pure. . . . But no! she ought to have taken Virginie to the South! . . . Perhaps other doctors would have saved her life! She accused herself, wished to follow her child, and cried out distressfully in her dreams. One in particular obsessed her. Her husband, wearing the garb of a sailor, had returned from a long voyage and was saying to her, weeping the while, that he had been commanded to take Virginie away. Then he and she endeavoured together to find a hiding-place somewhere.

Once, she re-entered the house from the garden, quite overcome. A moment ago (she could point out the exact spot) father and child appeared to her side by side. They were doing nothing; they were only looking at her.

For several months she remained in her room, listless. Félicité would lecture her gently—she must rouse herself for the sake of her son, and besides—in remembrance of "her."

"Of her?" replied Mme. Aubain, as though coming back to consciousness. "Oh! of course! . . . You do not forget." She had been scrupulously forbidden any allusion to the cemetery.

Félicité went to it every day. At four o'clock precisely she would walk past the houses, go up the hill, open the gate, and make her way to Virginie's grave. There was a little column of rose-coloured marble, with a tablet at its base, and a chain all round enclosing a miniature garden-plot. The borders were almost hidden by flowers. Félicité watered them and renewed the sand, going down on her knees to better dress the ground. Mme. Aubain, when she was able to visit the grave, derived some relief and a kind of consolation from it.

After this years passed by, all very much alike, and without other incidents than the return of the great festivals—Easter, the Assumption, All Saints. Domestic events constituted dates to serve as landmarks in years to come. Thus, in 1825, two glaziers whitewashed the hall; in 1827, a portion of the roof, falling down into the courtyard, nearly killed a man. In the summer of 1828 it fell to Madame to offer the Blessed Bread; Bourais, about this time, absented himself mysteriously; and gradually old acquaintances passed out of sight; Guyot, Liébard, Mme. Lechaptois, Robelin, l'oncle Gremanville, paralyzed now for a considerable time past.

One night the mail-cart driver announced in Pont-l'Évêque the revolution of July. A new Sub-Prefect was nominated some days later; the Baron de Larsonnière, who had been previously a consul in America, and who brought with him, in addition to his wife, his sister-in-law and her three daughters, almost grown up. They were all to be seen on their lawn, wearing loosely made blouses; they were the owners of a negro and a parrot. Mme. Aubain received a visit from them and duly returned it. Félicité used always to run to her mistress to let her know whenever she saw any of them approaching, no matter how far off they might be. But the only thing that could now arouse her were the letters from her son.

He could not follow any profession, spending all his

time in drinking-houses. She paid his debts, but he contracted new ones; and Mme. Aubain's sighs, as she sat knitting by the window, reached the ears of Félicité, turning her spinning wheel in the kitchen.

They used to walk together under the fruit wall; they talked always of Virginie, speculating as to whether such and such a thing would have pleased her, what she would have said on this occasion or on that.

All her little belongings were gathered together in a cupboard in the double-bedded room. Mme. Aubain abstained as much as possible from inspecting them. One summer's day she resigned herself to doing so, and moths flew out of the cupboard.

Her dresses lay folded under a shelf on which were three dolls, some hoops, a set of dolls'-house furniture, and the basin she used. Mme. Aubain and Félicité also took out the petticoats, stockings, and handkerchief's and spread them out upon the two beds before folding them up again. The sun shining on these poor little treasures revealed spots and stains and the creases made by the movements of the body that had worn them. Outside, the atmosphere was warm and blue mist; a thrush was warbling; the world seemed steeped in peace. Presently they came upon a small plush hat, with deep pile, chestnut-coloured; but it was all moth-eaten. Félicité took possession of it for herself. The eyes of the two women met and filled with tears. Then the mistress opened wide her arms and the servant threw herself into them; and they held each other fast, finding vent for their common grief in the kiss that annulled all difference of rank.

It was the first time in their lives that they had embraced, for Mme. Aubain was not demonstrative by nature. Félicité felt grateful to her as for some actual benefit, and henceforth tended her with as much devotion as a dumb animal, and with a religious veneration.

The benevolence of her heart developed. When she

heard in the street the drums of a regiment marching past, she would take up her position in front of the door with a jug of cider and invite the soldiers to drink. She helped to nurse those on the sick list. She took the Poles under her special protection, and one of them declared he wanted her to marry him. But she had a tiff with him; for returning one morning from the Angelus, she found him in her kitchen, in which he had settled down comfortably to the consumption of a salad.

After the Poles came Père Colmiche, an old man who was reputed to have been guilty of enormities in '93. He lived down by the riverside in what was left of a disused pigsty. The street urchins spied at him through chinks in the wall, and chucked stones which fell down on the squalid bed upon which he lay, shaken continually by a cough, his hair worn long, his eyelids inflamed, and on one of his arms a tumour bigger than his head. She provided him with linen and made efforts to cleanse his hovel; she wanted, indeed, to establish him in the bakehouse, if only it could be managed without disturbance or annoyance to Madame. When the cancerous growth burst she doctored the sore every day, sometimes bringing him some cake which she would place in the sun in a box lined with straw. The poor old man, dribbling and trembling, thanked her in his faint voice, and, fearing always lest he should lose her, stretched out his arms as he watched her retreating figure. He died, and she had a Mass said for the repose of his soul.

It was on that day that a piece of great good fortune befell her. Just as dinner was served, the negro belonging to Mme. Larsonnière made his appearance, carrying the parrot in its cage, with its perch, chain and padlock. A note from the Baronne informed Mme. Aubain that, her husband having been promoted to a Prefecture, they were going away that evening, and begged her to accept the bird as a souvenir and a mark of her regard.

It had long excited Félicité's imagination, for it came from

America, and the word recalled Victor—so much so that she had sometimes questioned the negro on the subject. Once she had gone so far as to say, " How pleased Madame would be if she had it! "

The negro had repeated the remark to his mistress, who, being unable to take it away with her, was glad to dispose of it in this manner.

IV

Its name was Loulou. Its body was green, the tips of its wings pink, its forehead blue, its throat golden.

But it had a tiresome habit of biting its perch, and it tore out its feathers, splashed about the water in its drinking-trough, and made such a mess that Mme. Aubain found it a nuisance and handed it over altogether to Félicité.

She set about educating it; soon it learnt to say " Charmant garçon " . . . " Serviteur, monsieur " . . . " Je vous salue, Marie." It was placed by the door, and people used to be surprised that it would not answer to the name of Jacquot, for all parrots are called Jacquot. It used to be likened sometimes to a turkey, sometimes even to a log of wood. These remarks stabbed Félicité to the heart. Certainly it was very perverse of Loulou to stop talking the moment anyone looked at it.

Yet it liked to have company, for on Sunday when " those " Rochefeuille women, M. de Houppeville, and certain new members of Madame's social circle—the apothecary Onfroy, M. Varin and Captain Mathieu—were playing cards, it would beat against the window-panes with its wings and conduct itself so violently that it was impossible to hear oneself speak.

No doubt old Bourais' countenance struck the bird as very droll. The moment it saw him it always began to laugh—to laugh with all the vigour at its command. Its clattering voice resounded through the courtyard; an echo repeated it, and the neighbours coming to their

windows laughed too. M. Bourais, to avoid being seen by the parrot, used to slink along the wall, covering his face with his hat, and, getting down to the river, would enter the house from the gardens; and the looks he would direct towards the bird were lacking in affection.

Loulou had been given a slap by the butcher's boy one morning, having taken the liberty of inserting its head into his basket; and ever since it had tried to pinch him through his shirt-sleeves. Fabu threatened to wring its neck for it, though in reality he was not cruel, despite his tattooed arms and heavy whiskers. Indeed, he had a liking for the parrot, and even insisted in his jovial way on teaching it how to curse. Félicité, horrified, removed it to the kitchen. It was now relieved of its chain and allowed to wander about the house.

When coming downstairs it would first lean its beak upon each step, then raise its right claw, its left following. Félicité used to be afraid that these gymnastic exercises would make it dizzy. It became ill and could no more talk nor eat. There was a thickness under the tongue, such as poultry sometimes suffer from. She cured it by removing this growth with her finger-nails. M. Paul was one day so imprudent as to puff the smoke of his cigar into the bird's nostrils. On another occasion Mme. Lormeau worried it with the end of her umbrella and it snatched at the ferrule. Finally, it got lost.

She had put it out on the grass to give it some fresh air and had gone away for a minute. When she returned there was no parrot to be seen! At first she looked about for it in the bushes, by the river-side, and on the roofs, paying no attention to her mistress, who was crying out to her, "Mind what you are doing. Have you taken leave of your senses?" Then she explored all the gardens of Pont-l'Évêque, and she inquired of everyone she met, "Do you happen by any chance to have seen my parrot?" To those who did not know the parrot she gave a description

of its appearance. Suddenly she thought she descried something green flying behind the windmills at the bottom of the hill, but when she got near there was no sign of it. A pedlar maintained that he had come across it shortly before at Saint Melaine, in Mère Simon's shop. She ran thither. They knew nothing about it there. At last she returned home quite worn out, her shoes in rags, despair in her heart; and sitting on the bench side by side with Madame, she had begun a recital of all her adventures, when suddenly a light weight fell upon her shoulder—it was Loulou! What in the world had it been up to? Perhaps it had gone for a turn in the neighbourhood!

It took her a long time to recover from the effects of her over-exertion—in fact, she never really recovered.

As the result of a cold, she had an attack of quinsy, followed soon after by an affection of the ears. Three years later she was deaf and had got into the way of talking very loud even in church. Although her sins might have been made known in every corner of the diocese without shame to her or evil effect upon the world at large, the curé deemed it well to hear her confession henceforth only in the sacristy.

She suffered from buzzings in her ears. Often her mistress would cry out, "Mon Dieu! how stupid you are!" and she would answer merely, "Yes, Madame," and go looking about for something close at hand.

The narrow field of her ideas became still further limited, and the pealing of bells and the lowing of cattle no longer existed for her. Living creatures of every description moved and acted with the noiselessness of phantoms. The only sound that penetrated to her ears was the voice of the parrot.

As though to amuse her, it would mimic the tic-tac of the turnspit, the sharp cry of the vendor of fish, the sound of the carpenter's saw from across the road, and when the bell rang, Mme. Aubain's voice calling out "Félicité, the door! the door!"

They would talk together, the bird going through incessantly with its three stock phrases, and Félicité replying in words which were no less inconsequent, yet in which her heart poured itself out. In her isolation Loulou was almost a son to her, or a lover. He walked up and down her fingers, nibbled at her lips, hung on to her kerchief; and when she leant forward shaking her head in the way nurses do, the great wings of her cap and the wings of the bird flapped in unison.

When the clouds gathered and the thunder rolled, Loulou would give forth cries, remembering perhaps the inundations of its native forests. The streaming down of the rain made it wild with excitement; it would dash about violently, flying up to the ceiling, knocking everything about, and escaping out of the window would dabble about in the garden; but it would soon make its way in again to the fireplace, and, hopping about to dry its feathers, would display now its tail, now its beak.

One morning in the terrible winter of 1837, when Félicité had put the bird in front of the fire on account of the cold, she found it dead in the centre of its cage, its head down, its claws grasping the iron bars. Doubtless it had died of a cold, but Félicité attributed its death to poisoning by eating parsley, and despite the lack of any kind of proof her suspicions fell upon Fabu.

She wept so much that her mistress said to her, "Well, well! Have it stuffed!"

She asked the advice of the chemist, who had always been friendly to the parrot.

He wrote to Havre. A certain Fellacher volunteered to undertake the job. As parcels sometimes went astray when sent by diligence, Félicité preferred to take it into Honfleur herself.

Leafless apple trees lined both sides of the road. The water in the ditches was frozen. Dogs barked on the edges of farmyards Félicité, her hands hidden under her

cloak, trudged along briskly in the middle of the road, wearing her little black sabots, and carrying her basket.

She crossed the forest, passed by the Haut-Chêne, and reached Saint-Gatien. Behind her, in a cloud of dust, gathering momentum as it came, a mail-cart at full gallop rushed down the incline like a waterspout. Catching sight of the woman, who turned neither to the right nor left, the driver jumped up from his seat and the postilion began to shout out warning, but the four horses clattered along ever faster. The two leaders grazed her; with a sudden jerk of the reins he contrived to swerve to one side of the road, but, furiously, he raised his arm and, as he passed, lashed Félicité with his great whip round stomach and neck so violently that she fell on her back.

Her first action when she regained consciousness was to open the basket. Loulou was all right, thank goodness! She felt a burning pain on her right cheek; putting her hands to it, she found them red. The blood was running.

She sat down on a heap of stones and stopped the bleeding of her face with a handkerchief; then she ate a crust of bread which she had the forethought to put in her basket, and took consolation for her own wound in contemplating the bird.

When she had got to the summit of Ecquemanville, she saw the lights of Honfleur sparkling in the night like stars; beyond, the sea spread out indistinctly. Then a feeling of weakness overcame her, and her childhood's misery, the disillusionment of her first love, her nephew's departure, Virginie's death, came back all at once like a flood-tide, rising to her neck and suffocating her.

She spoke to the captain of the vessel herself, and, without saying what it was she was consigning to his care, she gave him his instructions.

Fellacher kept the parrot a long time. He kept promising it for the following week; at the end of six months he announced its dispatch in a box, and then for a period there

was no further news. It looked as though Loulou would never return to her. "They have stolen him from me," she thought.

But at last it arrived—and looking a magnificent sight, perched on the branch of a tree which was fixed on to a mahogany pedestal. One claw was in the air, the head was cocked on one side. Loulou was biting a nut to which the bird-stuffer, carried away by his love for the grandiose, had given a gilt coating!

Félicité put it away safely in her own room.

This spot, to which she admitted very few visitors, had the aspect at once of a chapel and a bazaar; it contained so many religious objects as well as other miscellaneous treasures.

A large cupboard was so placed as to make it difficult to open the door. Opposite the window which overlooked the garden there was a round one from which you could see the courtyard; on a table standing near the folding-bed stood a jug of water, two combs and a piece of blue soap on a notched plate. On the walls were hung rosaries, medals, several statues of the Blessed Virgin, and a holy water font made of cocoa-nut wood; on the chest of drawers, covered with a cloth like an altar, stood the box made of shells that Victor had given her, together with a watering-pot, a toy balloon, some copy-books, the series of geographical charts, and a pair of boots; Virginie's little plush hat was tied by its ribbons to the nail from which hung the looking-glass. Félicité carried this form of respect so far as even to keep an old frock-coat of Monsieur's. She took to this room of hers, in fact, all the old belongings for which Mme. Aubain had no use. This accounted for a case of artificial flowers on one side of the chest of drawers, and a portrait of Comte d'Artois at the side of the window.

By means of a small bracket Loulou was set up on a portion of the chimney which projected into the room. Every morning, on waking, she caught sight of it in the

clear light of dawn, and without pain, full of peace, she recalled days that had gone and insignificant events in all their slightest details.

Cut off from all communication with everybody, she continued to live on like a somnambulist, in a kind of trance. The Corpus Christi processions revived her. She applied to her neighbours for the loan of torches and coloured mats in order to decorate the altar that was being erected in the street.

In church she would sit gazing at the Holy Ghost, and discovered in him some resemblance to the parrot. This resemblance came out in a more marked degree in an Épinal picture representing the Baptism of our Lord. With the purple wings and emerald body, this really represented a portrait of Loulou.

She bought this picture, and hung it up in the place by the window where she had previously put the Comte d'Artois, so that she could see the parrot and it together in the same glance. They became associated together in her mind, the parrot becoming sanctified by this connection with the Holy Ghost, who thus became more real in her eyes and easier to understand. God the Father, to announce Himself, could not have chosen a dove, for these birds have no voice, but rather one of Loulou's ancestors; and Félicité prayed before the sacred picture, but would turn slightly from time to time in the direction of the bird.

She wanted to enrol herself in the confraternity of the "Demoiselles de la Vierge," but Mme. Aubain dissuaded her from doing so.

Presently an important event took place—Paul's marriage.

After having been first a clerk in a notary's office, and then in business, in the Customs and Revenue services, and after making an effort to get into the Rivers and Forests Department, at last in his thirty-sixth year he had discovered, as though by a heavenly inspiration, his natural calling, his *métier :* that of a registrar. He displayed such remark-

able qualifications for this position that an inspector had offered him his daughter in marriage, promising at the same time to use his influence in his favour.

Paul, now sobered, brought her to visit his mother. She sniffed at the ways of Pont-l'Évêque, played the princess, and hurt Félicité's feelings. Mme. Aubain felt relieved when she took her departure.

The following week news came of the death of M. Bourais, in Lower Brittany, in an inn. A rumour that he had committed suicide was confirmed, and doubts were raised as to his honesty. Mme. Aubain examined her books and was not long in learning the litany of his misdeeds: misappropriations, fictitious sales of timber, forged receipts, etc. To add to this, he was the father of an illegitimate child, and had had " illicit relations with a creature from Dozule."

These iniquities afflicted her very much. In the month of March 1853 she began to feel a pain in her chest; her tongue became clouded, and the application of leeches afforded her no relief. On the ninth evening she died, aged seventy-two precisely.

She had been believed to be less old on account of her brown hair, plaits of which framed her pallid face, marked by small-pox. Few friends regretted her, for her proud manners had kept people at a distance.

Félicité, however, mourned her in a way that masters are seldom mourned. It seemed to upset all her calculations that Madame should die before she did; it seemed out of keeping with the order of things, unallowable and uncanny.

Ten days later (it took ten days to hurry up from Besançon) Paul and his wife appeared upon the scene. The latter turned out every drawer in the house, chose some furniture and sold the rest. The pair then returned home.

Mme. Aubain's arm-chair, her round table, her foot-warmer, the eight sitting-room chairs, disappeared. The wall space once occupied by the pictures was now a series

of yellow squares. The children's beds with their mattresses had also been carried off, and the cupboard in which Virginie's belongings had been cherished was now empty. Félicité went upstairs, beside herself with misery.

Next day there was a notice posted up on the front door; the apothecary shouted in her ear that the house was for sale.

She tottered and had to sit down. What chiefly troubled her was the idea of having to give up her room—it suited poor Loulou so well. Gazing with anguish at the bird, she prayed fervently to the Holy Ghost. She contracted the idolatrous habit of kneeling in front of the parrot to say her prayers. Sometimes the sun coming through the window struck its glass eye, making it emit a great luminous ray, which threw her into an ecstasy.

She had an income of three hundred and eighty francs a year, bequeathed her by her mistress. The garden provided her with vegetables; as for clothes, she had enough to last her until the end of her days, while she saved lighting by going to bed at dusk.

She rarely went out, not liking to pass the second-hand shop in which some of the old furniture of the house was now displayed for sale. She had dragged one leg since her shock; and as she was losing her strength, Mère Simon, whose grocery business had come to grief, came now every morning to cut up wood and draw water for her.

Her eyes became weak. She gave up opening the window-shutters. Many years passed. And the house remained unlet and unsold.

For fear lest they should get rid of her, Félicité refrained from asking for repairs. The laths of the roof began to rot; for an entire winter the bolster on her bed was damp. After the following Easter she spat blood.

Then Mère Simon had recourse to a doctor. Félicité wanted to know what was the matter with her. But, too

deaf to hear, she could only catch one word—" Pneumonia." It was familiar to her, and she said softly, " Ah! like Madame! " finding it natural to follow her mistress.

The time for the temporary altars now approached. The first of them was erected always at the foot of the hill, the second in front of the post-office, the third about half-way down the street. There was some contention as to the exact position of this one, and the parishioners had at last decided to place it in Mme. Aubain's courtyard.

Félicité's sufferings increased, and she worried over her inability to do anything for the altar. If only she could have put something on it! Then the parrot occurred to her. The neighbours objected; it was not suitable, they maintained. But the curé granted her his permission, and this made her so happy that she begged him to accept Loulou, her only valuable, when she should die.

From Tuesday until Saturday, the eve of Corpus Christi, she coughed more and more frequently. In the evening her face shrivelled up, her lips clove to her gums, and she began to vomit; next day at early dawn, feeling very low in herself, she sent for the priest.

Three good women stood round her while she received Extreme Unction. Then she declared that she wanted to speak to Fabu.

He arrived in his Sunday clothes, ill at ease in the dismal atmosphere.

" Forgive me," she said to him, trying to hold out her arms; " I believed it was you who killed him! "

What in the world was she talking about? The idea of suspecting a man like him of murder! Fabu grew indignant, and began to get excited. " She is off her head! Anybody can see that! "

From time to time Félicité talked with shadows. The neighbours left her, Mère Simon took her *déjeuner*.

A little later she took Loulou and held him out towards Félicité. " Come! Bid him good-bye! "

Though it was not a corpse, the worms had begun to eat it; one of its wings was broken, and the stuffing had begun to escape from its stomach. But, quite blind now, she kissed it on the forehead and pressed it against her cheek. Then Mère Simon took it away again to place it upon the altar.

V

The scent of flowers came from the meadows; there was a buzzing of flies; the sunshine made the surface of the river sparkle, and warmed the slates upon the roof. Mère Simon had returned to the room, and was slumbering peacefully.

The striking of a bell woke her. People were coming away from Vespers. Félicité's delirium left her, and, her thoughts intent on the procession, she saw it as though she were making part of it.

All the children from the schools, together with the choristers and the firemen, walked along the pavements, whilst in the middle of the road came first the Suisse with his halberd, the beadle with a great cross, the schoolmaster looking after his boys, the Sister watching anxiously the little girls under her charge; three of the smallest of these, with curly hair like angels, threw rose petals into the air as they advanced; the deacon, his arms outstretched, beat time for the music; and two incense-bearers bowed at every step in front of the Blessed Sacrament, carried by M. le Curé wearing his beautiful chasuble, beneath a canopy of red velvet, held up by four churchwardens. A mass of people followed, between the white cloths covering the walls of the houses. They arrived at the foot of the hill.

A cold sweat moistened Félicité's temples. Mère Simon wiped them with a piece of linen, saying to herself that some day her own time would come.

The murmur of the crowd grew in volume, for a moment waxed very loud, then faded away.

A fusillade shook the windows. It was the postilions firing a salute in front of the monstrance. Félicité, rolling her eyes, inquired in as low a tone as she could: "Is he all right?" She was worrying about the parrot.

Her death agony commenced. A rattle, more and more violent, shook her sides. Bubbles of foam rose to the corners of her mouth, and her whole body was in a tremble.

Now, the blare of the wind instruments made itself heard, the clear voices of the children, the deep voices of men. There were intervals of silence, and the trampling of feet, muffled by the flowers strewn along the ground, sounded like the pattering of sheep upon the grass.

The priests appeared in the courtyard. Mère Simon climbed on a chair so that she might look out of the circular window, and thus got a view of the altar.

Green garlands hung over the altar, which was decorated with a frill of English lace. In the centre there was a small casket containing relics, two orange trees at either end, and all along it silver candlesticks and porcelain vases, from which rose sunflowers, lilies, peonies, foxgloves, and tufts of hydrangea. This mass of brilliant colouring sloped downwards, extending from above the altar down to the carpet which had been spread over the ground. A variety of rare objects caught the eye. A vermilion sugar-basin had a wreath of violets; pendants of Alençon stone shone on tufts of moss; two Chinese screens depicted landscapes. Loulou, hidden beneath roses, displayed only his blue forehead, which looked like a slab of lapis-lazuli.

The churchwardens, the choristers and the children stood in a line along the three sides of the courtyard. The priest ascended slowly the steps of the altar and put down his great, shining, golden sun upon the lace-work cloth. All knelt down. There was a deep silence, and the incense-burners, swinging to and fro, grated upon their chains.

A cloud of blue smoke rose to Félicité's bedroom. She distended her nostrils, breathing it in with a mystical

sensuousness; then closed her eyes. Her lips smiled. The movements of her heart became gradually more faint, more gentle, as a fountain runs out, as an echo fades away; and when she gave up her last breath, she believed she saw in the opening heavens a tremendous parrot hovering above her head.

ÉMILE ERCKMANN

(1822–1899)

AND

LOUIS GRATIEN CHARLES ALEXANDER CHATRIAN

(1826–1890)

CITIZEN SCHNEIDER

(Translated by NORMAN PORTER)

I

"WHY is it that the memories of our childhood are unforgettable?" said the old sculptor Friedrich, lighting his pipe with an air of melancholy; "whilst one scarcely remembers the events of last month. Why is it that those of our youth remain in our minds and always seem to stay with us? For myself I can never forget my poor father's cabin, with its thatched roof, its low-ceilinged room, the wooden staircase leading to the garret, the recess with grey serge curtains, and the two little windows with leaded panes, overlooking the pass of the Schloucht, near Münster. I shall never forget them, nor the most trivial events of that time. Everything remains vivid in my recollection, above all the winter of 1785.

"During that winter Grandfather Yeri, his woollen cap pulled over his ears, slept from morning till evening in the old chair in the corner of the hearth. My mother spun, my father carved out of holly-wood heads for canes, to sell them in the spring. The shavings fell all round him and took on the shape of snails. Every now and again he

rested, struck a light, and putting the tinder to his pipe he cried out: 'Catherine, it's making progress! It's making progress!'—then, seeing me seated on my stool, regarding him fixedly, for there was nothing I liked better than watching him work, he smiled at me and went on with his job. All around our hut the snow deepened, deepened each day; the decrepit old walls disappeared under the snow; already we could see nothing through the lower panes of our windows, the lowest ones were of a sombre and opaque white.

"Several times I stood up on my chair and watched the clouds forming and re-forming slowly over the immense valley. Right opposite, the perpendicular rock of the Honeck, rising to the heavens, and lower down, in the defile, innumerable fir trees covered with frost.

"Nothing moved or stirred. The aspect of the country-side, covered with snow, made one feel cold and shivery; in the meantime indoors the fire burnt up brightly, it was hot. The crazy little door which communicated with the stable allowed the bleating of the goat and the lowing of our cow, Waldine, to be heard. It was a pleasure to hear any sounds of life in such deadly weather. At least we were not all alone in the snow-storm; we were with other of God's creatures, we still had some friends.

"I always remember that one morning Waldine, who no doubt was very tired of being cooped up in the dark, after having broken loose, I don't know how, came in to pay us a visit without any sign of timidity, and my father laughed good-naturedly.

"'Hee! Good-morning, Waldine,' he cried. 'You come in here without taking your hat off! Ha! ha! ha! Leave her alone, Catherine, leave her alone, she won't do any harm; give her time to breathe and appreciate the warmth and light.'

"It was I who took her back to the stable, and tied her up to the manger again.

" In this way the days went by, whilst the birds suffered starvation, and the wild beasts took refuge in the caves of the Honeck and the Valtim; we, crouching about the hearth, we dreamed on peacefully, and every evening my mother said:

" ' Still another day gone! Still another step on to spring! '

" All this I remember with pleasure; but strange events sometimes happen in this remote world, events which recurred to us again a long time afterwards, and which showed that men's wisdom and even their deeds of kindness are only foolishness.

" That particular year, on the last day of January, between one and two o'clock in the afternoon, a great hurricane arose. Although the house was sheltered from the north it trembled with each gust; at the end of an hour it was so covered with snow that the hurricane passed right over it. We had extinguished the fire, only a lamp burnt on the table. My mother prayed; I believe that my father prayed also. Grandfather himself had awakened and appeared terrified at the noise: all the snow that had fallen in the last three months reascended heavenwards in clouds like dust; outside everything howled, moaned and whistled; from time to time one heard great trees being torn up by their roots with terrifying crashes. If the wind had come against the front it would have burst our windows and blown the roof off; fortunately it blew down from the mountains.

" In the middle of this terrible uproar we seemed to hear human cries; and we, already in such fear for ourselves, we shivered anew in thinking of the danger to others. Each time my mother said: ' There is someone outside; ' and we listened with our hearts in our mouths; but the great voice of the hurricane dominated everything.

" This lasted for two hours; then there fell a great silence, and we could hear again the bleating of our goat.

" ' The wind has fallen," said my dear father; and going to the door, he listened for several moments, his finger on the latch.

" We were all behind him as he opened it, and we stared out with wide-open eyes. The light was dim because of the falling snow; a faint luminosity on our right indicated the position of the sun; it might have been about four o'clock.

" As we were peering through this grey light we perceived, two or three hundred paces below us, in the path that descends the Schloucht, a halted sledge with a horse in front. We could only see the horse's head and the top of the sledge uprights.

" ' There, then, is what we heard,' cried Grandfather Yeri-Hans.

" ' Yes,' said my father, re-entering the hut, ' an accident has happened.'

" He took the wooden shovel from behind the door and began to descend the slope, knee-deep in snow. As for me, I ran behind him in spite of the protests of my mother; grandfather also followed slowly.

" The further we descended the deeper the snow became. In spite of that, my father, having arrived at the edge of the slope above the path, slid to the bottom, balanced on the blade of the shovel, and remaining where I was I stopped and watched him.

" He took hold of the bridle; but immediately, seeing something in the snow two or three paces away, he went towards it and with difficulty raised up a large man dressed in black, whose head fell on his shoulder, and placed him on the sledge; and then with cries and blows drew the animal out of his hollow. It was a terrible business taking him to the house. My father succeeded eventually in dodging round all the rocks and tree roots where the snow had accumulated.

" Grandfather and I followed, very despondently, with our eyes fixed on the unfortunate wretch on the sledge. He had on black silk stockings, a soutane and shoes with silver buckles: he was a priest.

"And now if you can picture the distress of my mother on seeing the holy man in such a pitiable condition! It seems to me I can still hear her cry, her hands clasped above her head: 'Lord have pity on us!' She wished to send my father at once to Münster to fetch a doctor. But night had fallen, it was as dark as the inside of an oven, and with all the good-will in the world it would have been impossible to find the way in all that snow.

"In the midst of our distress we hurried to light the fire, to warm blankets; and as I got in everybody's way I was put to bed in grandfather's room.

"All night long I heard people moving below me; the light streamed through the chinks in the floor; my mother gave way to cries of lamentation. At last, about one o'clock, overcome with fatigue and an empty stomach, I went to sleep so soundly that if they had not wakened me up at eight o'clock I should have gone on slumbering.

"'Friedrich! Friedrich!' cried grandfather, lifting up the trapdoor with his bald head; 'Friedrich, come along, breakfast is ready!'

"I woke at the sound of his voice; I looked round, it was broad daylight, and the appetizing smell of porridge filled the house. I only took long enough to pull on my breeches of grey cloth and to put on my sabots before going down. All the events of the yesterday flashed through my mind. In spite of my keen hunger I was very curious to know what had happened. From the top of the staircase I leaned over the rail to look into the room: the soup tureen smoked on a nice white tablecloth; grandfather, seated facing me, made the sign of the cross; father and mother, standing, said the Benedicite fervently; and the big man, seated in the leather chair, at the corner of the hearth, his legs wrapped in a woollen blanket, with his plump hands crossed on his stomach, round as a barrel, resembled, with his fleshy face and red hair, a sleek cat sleeping on the warm cinders. It was quite affecting to see him.

" ' Come down, Friedrich,' said my mother, ' do not be afraid; Monsieur le Curé will not do you any harm.'

" The fat man turned his head and smiled at me, saying: ' Is this your little boy? '

" ' Yes, Monsieur le Curé.'

" ' Come here, little man,' quoth he.

" My mother took me by the hand and led me close to the good priest, who looked at me with his large grey eyes with a tender expression; he then patted my cheek and said: ' Does he know his prayers yet? '

" ' Oh! yes! Monsieur le Curé, they were the first things that we taught him.'

" ' Excellent! Excellent! '

" My mother had taken off my cap; and, with hands together, eyes on the ground, I repeated the Ave Maria and the Paternoster in one breath.

" ' Good, good,' said the fat man, pinching my ear. ' Ha, ha, ha, he'll grow up to be a good servant of God. Go, now, and breakfast, I am pleased with you! '

" He spoke gently, and the whole family thought: ' What a nice man! What a kind heart! What a misfortune if he had frozen to death in the Schloucht! '

" But a thing supervened which showed us this good man under an entirely different aspect. You will understand that the day before my father had taken into our room the belongings of Monsieur le Curé: his travelling trunk, his three-cornered hat, and a large bundle of papers. These things were placed upon our chest of drawers, in the corner near the hearth: the trunk below, the three-cornered hat above, and the roll of papers on the hat.

" In passing, I touched the bundle of papers, which fell on the floor and nearly rolled into the fire.

" At this, this man of peace gave a cry like a wolf, accompanied by frightful oaths. He dashed at the papers, tore them from the flames, and extinguished the smouldering ones with his hands. Quite white, he gave me a ferocious

glare that nearly frightened me out of my life. We were all dismayed, our mouths wide open. Looking at the papers where they were singed at the edge, he said, stammering and trembling: 'My Thucydides! you little beast, my Thucydides!' After which, rolling his papers up, and becoming aware of our condition of stupor, he shook his finger at me, reassuming his air of good-heartedness; but we no longer felt capable of laughing with him.

"'Ah! you naughty little rascal,' said he, 'you startled me. Just think that I have come straight from Cologne; yes, I have travelled more than one hundred leagues to obtain these old manuscripts from the Convent of St. Dié; it has taken me three months to put them in some kind of order; and the carelessness of this miserable child nearly destroyed a work which is perhaps unique in this world. It made me sweat with fear.'

"This was true, his expansive face was purple, beads of sweat bedewed his forehead.

"In spite of that, you will easily realize that the whole family remained very serious; we were not accustomed to hearing priests swear like cowherds. My mother was driven to silence. We ate in silence. When we had finished, my father went out. We heard him lead the horse out of the stable and harness it to the sledge in front of the door. At last he re-entered and said: 'Monsieur le Curé, if you will get into the sledge, we shall be in Münster in one hour.'

"'I will, gladly,' said the big man, rising.

"And looking round with an air of gravity he said: 'You are good folk, forget my momentary anger; the spirit is strong, but the flesh is weak. Allow me to show my gratitude.'

"He tried to give my mother a frederic d'or, but she declined it and replied: 'It is in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that we helped you in your trouble, Monsieur le Curé. If we had been in a similar position you would have done the same for us.'

"'No doubt, no doubt,' said he, 'but that does not prevent me. . .'

"'No, do not deprive us of the merit of a good action.'

"'Amen!' he said briskly.

"He took the roll of papers from the chest of drawers, put on his three-cornered hat and went out.

"My father had already placed the travelling trunk on the sledge; he had seated himself by the shafts; the curé sat behind, and we watched them making their way as far as the Roche-creuse. We were all thoughtful; frequently grandfather glanced silently at my mother; many ideas passed through our heads, but no one spoke.

"My father returned about four o'clock in the afternoon. He said that the priest of Cologne had alighted at the house of the curé of Münster.

"This year spring returned as always. The sun, at the end of five long months, melted the snow and dried the damp walls of our cabin. The cow and the goat were turned out to feed; the cattle-shed was emptied and aired. Driving the animals to the pasture, cracking my whip, I made the echoes resound with my cries of joy. The heather flowered again, and the hurricane was forgotten."

II

"Several years had passed, Grandfather Yeri was dead, and my father had sent me to lower Alsace as an apprentice in stone-carving with my Uncle Conrad at Vettenheim. I was just about fifteen years of age, beginning to consider myself a man. It was at this period that everybody wore the blood-red Phrygian cap of Liberty and the tricolour cockade; when hundreds left the locality in their rough grey trousers and with their muskets on their shoulders.

"I remember that at this time two regiments were formed at Strasbourg; drummer boys were badly needed, as every man insisted on shouldering a gun. Five boys presented

themselves at Vettenheim; I was one of them; lots were drawn to decide who should go. It was our neighbour, the little Fritzel, who went, and all the village envied him because he had won the draw. Nowadays one wins when one loses!

"At the same time the Abbé Schneider was bent on exterminating all the clergy and the monks in Alsace. The goddess of Reason and the Three Graces were the only deities recognized.

"One morning I was roughing out a stone in our workshop, which overlooked the small square with its fountain; my Uncle Conrad was smoking his pipe at the gate, and Aunt Gredel was sweeping up the chips in the passage.

"It was about ten o'clock, when a great uproar arose outside; people ran past the house, while others hurried across the little square; others again, following the crowd, demanded to know what was happening.

"Naturally I ran out to see what was going forward. I was still in the passage when the clip-clop of trotting horses, the clashing of sabres, the dull rumbling of a heavy cart made itself heard in the distance; then the sound of a trumpet rang through the village.

"At the same moment, a *peloton* of Hussars debouched into the square; the leading sections, with their pistols cocked, and the others with drawn sabres. Further back rode, on a black horse, a huge man, in a blue riding coat, with the lapels turned back over the chest. A large hat, surmounted with tricolour plumes, was set at an angle on his head, the scarf of office about his middle, and the cavalry sword banging against his knee boot. Behind him, jolting over the rough stones, followed a large tumbril, drawn by grey horses, and full of red beams.

"The huge man with the feathers was smiling, whilst the people, white-faced, crowded back against the wall, with open mouth and arms hanging inert and helpless. I at once recognized in him the parson we had rescued from the snow-drift.

"Several of the village zanies, to give themselves the

appearance of those who had nothing to fear, cried: 'Here comes the Citizen Schneider to clear out the vermin from Vettenheim! Let the aristocrats look out!' Others sang with fearful grimaces: 'les aristocrats à la lanterne,' waving their arms and legs in time to the tune; but this did not prevent them from having a queasy feeling in the stomach and a shaky laugh like everybody else.

"The procession halted in front of the fountain; Schneider, raising his eyes, took in the whole square in a sweeping glance, the high gables with their pointed roofs, the innumerable onlookers at the dormer windows, and the little niches from which the sacred figures had long been removed.

"'What a nest of vipers!' he said to the captain of Hussars, 'what a nest! We shall have work here for at least eight days.'

"Hearing this, Uncle Conrad took me by the arm, saying: 'Let us go in, Friedrich, let us go in! We are so close to him that if he sees us we shall be amongst the first chosen. It is terrible!'

"He trembled in all his limbs. As for me, I felt shudders all down my back.

"As we re-entered the workshop, I saw Aunt Gredel praying aloud, with her hands pressed together. I hurriedly thrust her into the kitchen and shut the door; her piety would have incurred the risk of the guillotine for all of us.

"Then my uncle and I peered out through the small window. The crowd outside was still singing: 'Ça ira, les aristocrats à la lanterne!' like grasshoppers who sing as winter approaches, and which the first frosts destroy.

"Many folk were standing in front of the window; through the gaps between their heads and shoulders we saw the Hussars, Citizen Schneider, the fountain, and the gaunt tumbril. Two big fellows were about to unload the beams; they had honest faces; the innkeeper Roëmer handed them a bottle of eau-de-vie; and a little man, dry and pale, and as weak as a match-stalk, with a long nose

and a face as sharp as a razor, garbed in a short red blouse tied round the middle, superintended the work. He looked like a veritable figure of Punch; but God preserve us from such a Punch! It was the executioner!

"While these things were going on under our eyes, the Mayor Rebstock, an honest wine-grower, serious of mien, broad-shouldered, his three-cornered hat on the back of his head, advanced across the square.

"Twice a week, Rebstock gathered all the village children into the church, and there taught them the Republican catechism. He was a level-headed man; he had been anticipating the visit of Citizen Schneider and had made himself a coat out of the altar-cloth to placate the bloody-minded ruffian.

"As he drew near, Schneider, leaning on the neck of his horse, cried: 'Here is the press, where are the grapes?' 'What grapes, Citizen Schneider?' 'The aristocrats!' 'There are none here, we are all good patriots.'

"Schneider's expression was ferocious; I seemed once again to see him snatching the roll of papers out of the fire.

"'You lie!' cried he, 'you are one yourself. What is that gold and silver on your clothing, when the Republic has not enough to feed her children?"

"'That, Citizen Schneider, is an altar-cloth, I am wearing it to show my contempt for the hydra head of superstition.'

"Then Schneider burst into a peal of laughter, crying: 'Good luck to you, good luck to you! But think carefully now, for all that, there must be some aristocrats here!'

"'No, they've all fled. Our boys have gone to look for them at Coblentz, and our children have gone with them to beat the charge.'

"'I can quite realize that,' said Schneider. 'You look to me like a true patriot. Your idea about the altar-cloth appeals to me. I shall come to dinner with you. Good, ha-ha-ha!'"

"He hugged his stomach with both hands.

" All the Hussars dined at the Mayor's house with Schneider. For this purpose a requisition was made throughout the village, and everybody gave of the best he had. The next morning Schneider visited the Club; he listened to the children repeating all together ' The Rights of Man.'

" Everything should have gone off well. Unfortunately, an old bellringer, who considered himself an aristocrat, had hidden himself in the loft of the " Lion d'or "; the Hussars, looking for some bundles of hay, discovered him, and they wanted to know why this poor devil had hidden himself.

" Schneider, on learning that he had rung the bells, had him guillotined whilst they were still at table. This was a source of real sorrow to Rebstock; but he dared not say anything for fear of being guillotined himself.

" Schneider left the same day, to the infinite relief of the whole village.

" That is how I recognized the evil knave, and I have often thought since that if my father had known what was going to happen later he would have left him to perish in the Schloucht.

" As for the old Mayor of Vettenheim, he was never forgiven for having made himself a coat out of an altar-cloth; and the old gossips in particular, whom he had saved by this means from the guillotine, with unabating fury never ceased to curse him, which did him a great injustice.

" One day when I was talking to him in his vineyard, and we were speaking of this particular episode, he smiled sadly and said: ' If, however, I had let their necks be severed they would be in Schneider's basket, destroyed no less than the altar-cloth. I have nothing to reproach myself with, I should have been a coward like everybody else.'

" Then I thought, ' Poor old Rebstock is right, but it is not encouraging to save people's lives at the risk of being either cursed or guillotined! Yet if men did not do these things out of Christian charity they would indeed be lower than the beasts. It is sad to think of, but it is the truth! ' "

EDMOND ABOUT

(1828–1885)

THE TWINS

(Translated by C. W. Bell, M.A.)

I

When I was taking my entrance examination for the École Normale (it was in the October of the year of grace 1848), I struck up a friendship with two of my fellow competitors, two brothers called Debay. They were Bretons, having been born at Auray and sent to school at Vannes. Although they were within a few minutes of being the same age, they had no feature in common, and never have I seen twins so unlike one another.

Matthew Debay was a little man of twenty-three, plain and dumpy. His arms were too long, his shoulders hunched up too high, and his legs too short: you would have said he was a humpback who had lost his hump.

His brother Léonce was the ideal of aristocratic beauty: tall, well made, slender, with a Grecian profile, a proud look, and a magnificent moustache. His almost blue-black hair shook on his head like a lion's mane.

Poor Matthew was not red-haired, but not far from it; his beard and hair exhibited a sample of every colour. His most pleasing feature was a pair of small grey eyes, that beamed with shrewdness, candour, gentleness, and the kindest good-nature. The beauty which had been refused to the rest of his body had found a nook to shelter in there.

When the two brothers came up for their examinations, Léonce twirled a silver-headed walking-stick which aroused

much envy; Matthew philosophically carried about under his arm a huge red umbrella which won for him the goodwill of the examiners.

However, he failed like his brother: the school at Vannes had not taught them enough Greek. Matthew's failure was regretted at the college: he had the vocation, the desire to learn, the passion for teaching: he was a born schoolmaster.

As for Léonce, we were unanimous in thinking that it would be a great pity for such a handsome youth to shut himself up like us in a university cloister. We should have been as sorry if he had assumed the gown as if he had adopted the cowl.

The two brothers were not without resources. Indeed we thought them rich when we compared their means with our own: they had Uncle Yvon.

Uncle Yvon, formerly a skipper in the coasting trade, and later a shipowner in the sardine fisheries, possessed several boats, many nets, some land, and a pretty house on the quay-side at Auray. As he had never found time to marry, he had remained a bachelor.

He was a large-hearted man, very good to the poor, and especially to his family, who stood greatly in need of him.

The people of Auray held him in high esteem; he was on the town council, and the little boys used to take off their caps to him and say:

"Good-day, Captain Yvon!"

The worthy man had taken into his own home Monsieur and Madame Debay, and he saved two hundred francs a month for the children.

Thanks to this generosity, Léonce and Matthew were able to live at the Hôtel Corneille, which is the "Hôtel des Princes" of the Latin Quarter.

Their room cost fifty francs a month, and a fine room it was. It boasted two mahogany beds with red curtains,

two arm-chairs, several ordinary chairs, a glazed bookcase, and even (Heaven help me!) a carpet.

Our young men had their meals at the hotel; the board is not so bad at seventy-five francs a month. Board and lodging absorbed the two hundred francs supplied by Uncle Yvon; Matthew provided for the other expenses. His age would not permit of his competing a second time for admission to the École Normale. He said to his brother:

"I mean to prepare for the Licentiate in Arts examination. Once I have my degree as Licentiate, I will write my two theses for my doctor's degree, and Doctor Debay will one day or other obtain a post as assistant professor in some faculty. You will work at medicine or law; you are free to do as you like."

"What about the money?" asked Léonce.

"I'll raise the money somehow. I called at Sainte-Barbe and asked to give lessons. I was accepted as tutor for boys in the third and second classes: two hours' work every morning and two hundred francs every month. I shall have to get up at five o'clock, but we shall be rich."

"Besides," added Léonce, "you are one of the early birds, and it is a pleasure to you to waken the sun."

Léonce chose law. He spoke like an oracle, and nobody doubted that he would make an excellent barrister.

He attended the lectures, took notes, and carefully wrote them out; after which he dressed up, gadded about Paris, put in an appearance here, there, and everywhere, and spent the evening at the play.

Matthew, wearing a brown coat which I still remember, listened to all the professors of the Sorbonne, and worked of an evening in the Sainte-Geneviève library. The whole Latin Quarter knew Léonce; nobody in the world suspected the existence of Matthew.

I used to go and see them nearly every time I went out; that is to say on Thursdays and Sundays. They used to

lend me books, Matthew worshipping George Sand, Léonce being mad about Balzac.

The budding professor sought relaxation in the company of François le Champi, Bonhomme Patience, or the Bessons of the Bessonière. His simple, serious soul roamed in a dream along the red-brown furrows of the plough, along the paths edged with heather, or under the mighty chestnut trees which shade the Devil's Pool.

Léonce's restless mind followed entirely different tracks. Anxious to fathom the mysteries of Parisian life, greedy of pleasure, light, and noise, he breathed in Balzac's novels an air as intoxicating as the perfume of a hothouse. It was with a fascinated eye that he followed the fortunes of a Rubempré, a Rastignac, a Henri de Marsay.

He saw himself dressed in their clothes, he wormed himself into their life, looked on at their duels, their love affairs, their undertakings, their victories; he triumphed with them.

Then he would come and look at himself in the glass.

"Were they better-looking than I am? Am I not as good as they were? What is there to prevent me from succeeding like them?

"I possess their good looks, their intelligence, an education which they never had, and, what is better still, the sense of duty. In my school-days I learnt the distinction between good and evil. I shall be a de Marsay without his vices, a Rubempré without Vautrin, a Rastignac blessed with scruples: what a future in store for me! all the delights of a pleasurable life and all the pride of a virtuous one!"

When the two brothers half closed their eyes and interrupted their reading to listen to voices speaking within them, it was safe to assert that Léonce heard the chink of the millions of Nucingen or Gobsek, and Matthew the tinkling sound of the rustic bells which tell that the cattle are coming home.

We sometimes went out together. Léonce would take us to the Boulevard des Italiens, and into the finest parts

of Paris. He would choose mansions, buy horses, engage footmen. When he saw an unattractive face in a pretty carriage, he would take us to task:

"Everything's all wrong," he would say, "and the world is a silly place. Wouldn't that carriage suit us a hundred times better?"

He said *us* out of politeness. His passion for horses was so strong that Matthew bought him a book of twenty tickets at the riding-school.

When we left it to Matthew to take us out, he would wend his way toward the woods of Meudon and Clamart. He held that the country was more beautiful than the town, even in winter, and the crows against the snow were more pleasing to his eye than the town-folk in the mud. Léonce followed us grumbling and lagging behind.

When my turn came I took my friends for some curious walks.

At the École Normale there has been founded a sort of charity organization society. A contribution of a few coppers a week, the proceeds of an annual raffle, and the cast-off clothing of the School constitute a modest fund which we draw upon every day without ever exhausting it.

We distribute in the district certain printed cards representing firewood, bread, or soup, articles of clothing, a little linen, and plenty of kind words. The great advantage of this little institution is to remind young men that poverty does exist.

Matthew used to go with me oftener than Léonce up and down the tortuous staircases of the 12th arrondissement. Léonce said:

"Poverty is a problem of which I intend to discover the solution. I will pluck up all my courage, I will overcome all my dislike, I will penetrate to the very depths of these ill-starred houses into which sun and bread do not find admittance every day; I will lay my finger on the ulcer which is wasting away our community, and which brought

it, quite recently, to the brink of the grave; I will learn in what proportion vice and fatality make for the degradation of our species."

Admirable things he said, but it was Matthew who came with me.

One day he followed me to the house of a poor fellow in the Rue Traversine, whose name I cannot recall. I only recollect that he had been nicknamed *Le Petit-Gris*, because he was little and his hair was grey. He had a wife and no children, and he re-seated rush-bottomed chairs.

We paid him our first visit in July 1849. Matthew felt chilled to the marrow of his bones on coming into the Rue Traversine.

It is a street of which I do not wish to speak ill, for it will be demolished before six months are out. But meanwhile it is rather too much like the streets of Constantinople. It lies in a quarter of Paris which Parisians hardly know; it is contiguous to the Rue de Versailles, the Rue du Paon, the Rue de la Montagne Sainte-Geneviève; it runs parallel to the Rue Saint-Victor.

Perhaps it is paved or macadamized, but I can't answer for that: the surface is littered with chopped straw, rubbish of all sorts, and urchins very much alive and rolling about in the mud.

To right and left stand two rows of houses, high, bare, and dirty, holed with small curtainless windows. Each window is adorned somewhat picturesquely with rags, patiently waiting for the wind to take the trouble to come and dry them. The Rue de Rivoli is much higher class, but Petit-Gris had not the means to rent a room in the Rue de Rivoli.

He told us his tale of poverty: he earned one franc a day. His wife wove rush mats and earned between fifty and sixty centimes. Their lodging was a room on the fifth story; their floor, a layer of beaten earth; their window, a patchwork of oiled paper.

I pulled out of my pocket a few bread and soup tickets. Petit-Gris received them with a slightly ironical smile.

"Sir," he said to me, "you will excuse me for meddling where I have no business, but my idea is that it is not with those little cards that you are going to cure poverty. You might as well apply lint to a wooden leg.

"You have taken the trouble to climb my five stories with your friend to bring me six pounds of bread and two quarts of soup. That will keep us for two days.

"But will you come the day after to-morrow? No, that is impossible: you have other things to do. So in two days I shall be in the same fix as if you had never come at all. Indeed, I shall be hungrier, for a man's stomach is like a wild beast the day after a good dinner.

"If I were rich like you" (here Matthew dug his elbow into my ribs), "I should contrive so as to set people on their legs for the rest of their days."

"How, pray? If the recipe is a good one we will make use of it."

"There are two ways: you either buy them a business or get them a Government appointment."

"Do hold your tongue," said his wife. "I always said you would put people against you with your ambition."

"Where's the harm, if I am capable? I admit that I have always had an idea of asking for a situation. If I were offered ten francs to set up as a costermonger, I certainly should not refuse, but I should always rather regret the situation I have in view."

"And what situation is that, please?" asked Matthew.

"Scavenger of the city of Paris. You earn your franc a day and you are free at ten in the morning at the latest. If you could get me that, my good sirs, I should double my earnings. I should have enough to live on, you would be saved climbing up here with little tickets in your pockets, and I should be the one to go to your house and thank you."

We knew nobody at the Prefecture, but as Léonce was

intimate with the son of a chief of police, he used his influence to obtain a nomination for Petit-Gris.

When we came to congratulate him, the first piece of furniture that struck our eyes was a gigantic broom, the handle of which was adorned with an iron band. The proprietor of this broom thanked us warmly.

"Thanks to you," he said to us, "I hold my head above water; my chiefs already appreciate me, and I do not despair of getting my wife enlisted in the brigade; that would be wealth for us. But there are on our landing two ladies who have great need of your help; unfortunately they haven't got hands made for scavenging."

"Let us go and see them," said Matthew.

"Let me have a word with you first. They are not people like my wife and myself: they have seen better days. The lady is a widow. Her husband was a wholesale jeweller in the Rue d'Orléans, in the Marais quarter.

"Last year he set out for California with a machine he had invented, a gold-finding machine; but the ship was wrecked on the way there with husband, machine, and everything else.

"The ladies read in the newspapers that not a stick had been saved. So they sold the little they had left and went to live in Rue d'Enfer; and then the lady fell ill and this took all the money they had. So they came to live here.

"They do embroidery work from morning to night till their eyes ache, but they don't make much. My wife assists them in the housework when she has time; we are not rich, but we gladly give a helping hand to those who are down on their luck.

"I am telling you this to make you understand that the ladies ask nothing from anyone, and that it will be necessary to use tact to induce them to accept anything.

"Moreover, the young lady is as pretty as a picture, and that makes them difficult to approach, as you can understand."

Matthew turned red all over at the idea that he might have been indiscreet.

"We will try to find a way," he said. "What is the lady's name?"

"Madame Bourgade."

"Thank you."

Two days later, Matthew, who had never been willing to give private lessons, undertook to prepare a young man for the bachelors' examination. He devoted himself so heartily to the task that his pupil, who had failed four or five times, passed on the 18th of August, at the beginning of the holidays, and it was not till then that the two brothers set out for Brittany.

Before starting, Matthew handed me fifty francs.

"I shall be away five weeks," he said to me; "I must be back in October for the reopening of school and the licentiate examination. You will go to the post office every Monday and take a postal order for ten francs in the name of Mme. Bourgade: you know the address. She believes it comes from one of her husband's debtors, who is paying up by instalments.

"Do not show yourself at the house: you must not arouse the suspicions of the ladies. If either of them should fall ill Petit-Gris would come and warn you, and you would write and let me know."

Hadn't I told you before that nothing but kindly feelings were to be read in the little grey eyes of Matthew? Why have I not kept the letter he wrote to me during the holidays? You would be delighted with it.

He described for me, with simple-minded enthusiasm, the country-side all golden with broom, the Druidical stones of Carnac, the dunes of Quiberon, the sardine fishery in the bay, and the red-sailed flotilla that gathers the oysters in the Auray river.

All this struck him as new after a year's absence. His brother was rather bored, and thought only of Paris. As for

him, everything he came across was a joy. His parents were so well! Uncle Yvon was so big and fat! The house was so pretty, the beds so soft, the food so plentiful! (I have perhaps forgotten to tell you that Matthew ate as much as two.)

"Do you know the only thing that has saddened me?" he wrote as a postscript. "I will unburden myself to you, even though you should laugh at me. There are in this house two big rooms lying idle, with good floors, nice and airy, well furnished, and not used by anybody. I am sure my uncle would let them for next to nothing to any respectable family who might like to take them. And you pay a hundred francs a year to live in the Rue Traversine."

Matthew came back in October, and with the greatest ease won his diploma as Licentiate in Arts. The examiners' report was so favourable that he was offered a post as fourth-form master at the school at Chaumont; but he could not make up his mind to leave his brother and Paris.

From time to time he would give me news of Rue Traversine: Mme. Bourgade was poorly. You will not quite understand his interest in his invisible protégées unless I let you into the great secret of his youth: he had never yet been in love.

As his comrades had not spared him their jokes on his plainness of features, his modesty went so far that he looked upon himself as a monster. If you had tried to tell him that a woman might love him such as he was, he would have thought you were making fun of him.

He sometimes dreamed that a fairy struck him with her wand, and that he became another man. This transformation was the indispensable preface to all his love romances. In real life he passed women by without looking up: he feared the very sight of him might be unpleasant to them.

On the day when he became the unknown benefactor of a lovely maiden, he felt within his heart a humble and

fond satisfaction. He compared himself to the hero of *Beauty and the Beast*, who hides his face and reveals only his soul.

It was an unforeseen accident that brought him into the presence of Mademoiselle Bourgade. He was in Petit-Gris' lodging asking for news when Aimée came in crying for help. Her mother had fainted. Matthew ran with the others. Next day he brought a resident doctor from the Pitié Hospital.

Mme. Bourgade was only suffering from exhaustion, and she was soon well again. Petit-Gris' wife was established in her room as nurse. She went for the medicines and the nourishing foods; and she was such an adept at bargaining that she got them for next to nothing.

So Mme. Bourgade drank an excellent Médoc which cost her sixty centimes a bottle; she ate ferruginous chocolate at two francs a kilogramme.

It was Matthew who worked these miracles, and made no boast of it. They saw in him merely an obliging neighbour; they thought he lodged in the Rue Saint-Victor. The patient gradually got used to the presence of the young schoolmaster, who showed her all the delicate attentions of a girl.

Her maternal prudence did not put her on the qui vive against him: she hardly looked upon him as a man. From the plainness of his dress she judged he was poor: she interested herself in him as he interested himself in her.

On a certain Monday in the month of December she saw him arrive in his brown coat, and without a cloak, in the intense cold. She told him, after much beating about the bush, that she had just received a sum of ten francs, and she offered to lend him half. Matthew did not know whether to laugh or cry: he had pawned his cloak that very morning for these beggarly ten francs.

This was the stage at which they had arrived after a month's acquaintance.

Aimée yielded less readily to the pleasures of an intimate friendship. For her Matthew was a man. When she compared him to Petit-Gris and the dwellers in Rue Traversine, she thought him aristocratic.

Besides, at the age of sixteen she had hardly had time to make a study of the human race. She was unaware not only of Matthew's plainness of features, but also of her own beauty; there was no mirror in the house.

Mme. Bourgade told Matthew what he partly knew already, thanks to the gossiping of Petit-Gris.

Her husband was carrying on his business indifferently well, and was hardly making enough to live on, when he heard of the discovery of California.

Like a man of sense, he guessed that the earliest explorers of this happy land would seek the gold ingots and nuggets buried in the rock without taking time to get the most out of the gold-bearing sands. He said to himself that the surest and most lucrative speculation would consist of washing the dust of the mines and the sand of the ravines.

Full of this idea he constructed a very ingenious machine, which he called after his own name, the Bourgade Separator. To test it, he mixed thirty grammes of gold dust with a hundred kilogrammes of earth and sand. The separator picked out all the gold to within a couple of decigrammes.

On the strength of this experiment M. Bourgade gathered together the little he possessed, left his wife enough to live on for six months, and embarked on the *Belle Antoinette*, starting from Bordeaux at the mercy of God.

Two months later the *Belle Antoinette* was lost with all hands as she was sailing out of the channel off Rio de Janeiro.

Matthew bethought himself that without taking a voyage to California it might be possible to work the late M. Bourgade's invention for the benefit of the widow and daughter.

He begged Mme. Bourgade to entrust him with the plans which she had kept, and I was instructed to show

them to a student of the Central Engineering College. The consultation was not a long one. The young engineer said to me after one moment's examination:

"Nothing new in that! It's the Bourgade Separator. It is on the market, and the Brazilians are manufacturing ten thousand a year at Rio. Do you know the inventor?"

"He met his death by shipwreck."

"The machine must have kept afloat: you hear of that sort of thing every day."

I returned to the Hôtel Corneille, quite crestfallen, to give an account of my mission. I found the two brothers in tears. Uncle Yvon had died of apoplexy, leaving them all his property.

II

I have kept a copy of Uncle Yvon's will. Here it is:

"The 15th of August, 1849, being Assumption Day, I, Matthew Jean Léonce Yvon, being sound in body and mind and fortified by the sacraments of the Church, have drawn up this my last will and testament.

"In anticipation of the accidents to which human life is exposed, and desiring that, if anything should happen to me, my property may be apportioned without dispute between my heirs, I have divided my fortune into two shares as equal as I have been able to make them, that is to say:

"1. A sum of fifty thousand francs bringing in five per cent., and invested through the kindness of M^e^ Aubryet, notary of Paris.

"2. My house situate at Auray, my heaths, arable lands, and estates of whatever sort; my boats, nets, fishing tackle, arms, furniture, clothes, linen, and other objects of personal property, the whole valued in all good conscience and fairness at fifty thousand francs.

"I give and bequeath the totality of these possessions to my nephews and godsons, Matthew and Léonce Debay,

enjoining on each one of them to choose either amicably or by drawing lots one or other of the two above-mentioned shares, without having recourse under any pretext to the intervention of lawyers.

"In the event of my dying before my sister Yvonne Yvon, dame Debay, and her husband my excellent brother-in-law, I entrust to my heirs the care of their old age; and I rely on it that they will let them want for nothing, after the example which I have always set them."

The division of the property was not a lengthy matter, and there was no need to draw lots. Léonce chose the money and Matthew took the remainder. Léonce said:

"What do you suppose I would do with poor uncle's boats? I should look well dragging for oysters and trawling for sardines! I should have to live at Auray, and the very thought of it makes me yawn! You would soon hear that I was dead, and that hankering after the boulevard was the cause of my death.

"If by good or ill luck I should escape destruction, all this little fortune would soon come to naught in my hands. Do I know anything about renting a farm, leasing a fishery, or settling accounts in partnership with half a dozen sailors?

"Let Matthew hand over the money to me; I will invest it in a sound security which will bring me in twenty to one. That's how I understand business."

"As you will," replied Matthew. "I don't think you would be obliged to live at Auray. Our parents are in good health, thank God, and are perhaps equal to the work. But do tell me what is this miraculous security in which you propose to invest your money?"

"My brains. Listen to me quite seriously. Of all the roads that lead a young man to fortune the shortest is neither trade, nor industry, nor art, nor medicine, nor the law courts, nor even speculation; it is—guess."

"Well! I can see nothing left but highway robbery, and

that is daily becoming more difficult, for you can't make steam-engines stand and deliver."

"You forget marriage. It is marriage which has made the best houses in Europe.

"Shall I tell you the story of the Counts of Hapsburg? Seven hundred years ago they were a little, not much, richer than I am. By dint of marrying, and getting heiresses for their wives, they founded one of the greatest monarchies in the world, the Austrian Empire. I shall wed an heiress."

"Which one?"

"That I cannot tell you, but I shall find her."

"With your fifty thousand francs?"

"Wait a bit! You must know that if I started off in quest of a wife with my little pocket-book containing fifty bank-notes, all the millions would laugh in my face; the utmost I should achieve would be to find a haberdasher's daughter or the heiress presumptive to a hardware business.

"In a sphere of society in which such a paltry sum would be of any account there would be nobody to appreciate my personal appearance, or my intelligence, or my education. For, after all, we are not here to affect modesty."

"Oh, don't apologize!"

"In the society into which I mean to marry, my wife shall marry me for myself, without asking what I've got. When a coat is well made and worn to advantage, my dear boy, no girl of any social standing wants to know what there is in the pockets."

Thereupon Léonce explained to his brother that he would use Uncle Yvon's crown pieces to force the gates of the world of fashion. A long experience, acquired through the novels he had read, had taught him that with nothing one can do nothing, but that with fine dress, a fine horse, and fine manners, one can always contrive to bring off a love match.

"Here is my plan," he said. "I shall run through my capital. For a year I shall have an income of fifty thousand

francs to all appearances, and it will be hard luck if I don't get a girl who has them in reality to fall in love with me."

"Why, you fool, you will ruin yourself!"

"No, I will invest my money at two thousand per cent."

Matthew did not take the trouble to argue with his brother. After all, the funds invested would not be available till June; there was no immediate danger.

Uncle Yvon's heirs made no change in their way of living; they were no richer than they were before.

The boats and the nets kept the Auray household going. Me Aubryet continued to allow two hundred francs a month as in the past: the lessons at Sainte-Barbe and the visits to Rue Traversine were still in full swing. Truth compels me to say that Léonce was not so assiduous in attending the College lectures as he was his dancing and fencing classes.

Petit-Gris, still ambitious and, I fear, rather a schemer, obtained the nomination for his wife, and enthroned a second broom in his lodgings. This was the only event of the winter.

In May Mme. Debay wrote to her sons that she was in sore trouble. Her husband had a great deal to do and was not equal to it: one man more in the house would not have been too many.

Matthew began to fear that his father was overdoing it; he knew him to be a hard worker and courageous in spite of his years; but no man is young at sixty, even in Brittany.

"If I followed my own inclination," he said to me one day, "I should go and spend six months yonder. My father is killing himself."

"What is there to prevent you?"

"First of all, my coaching."

"Hand it over to one of our student friends. I can mention six of them who are more in need of it than you."

"And then Léonce will be up to all sorts of foolishness."

"Don't worry about that. If it is to be so, it isn't your presence that will check him."

"And then. . . ."

"Then what?"

"The ladies!"

"You left them all right during the holidays. Let me have them again to look after; I will take care that they want for nothing."

"But *I* shall miss them," he answered, blushing up to the eyes.

"Ho! ho! out with it! You had never told me there was love in the wind."

The poor fellow sat there dumbfounded. For the first time it dawned on him that he loved Mlle. Bourgade. I helped him to make his self-examination; I got out of him one by one all the little secrets of his heart, and he stood arraigned and convicted of a passionate love.

In all my life I have never seen a man more abashed. If anyone had told him that his father had become a bankrupt I think he would have displayed less shame.

I had to reassure him a little and to reconcile him with himself. But when I asked him whether he thought his love was returned, he was once more overcome with a confusion which was pitiful to behold.

In vain I assured him that love is "catching," and that nineteen times out of twenty true passions are returned; he thought himself an exception to every rule. He modestly placed himself on the lowest rung of the ladder of human beings, while in Mlle. Bourgade he saw perfections more than human. No knight of the olden times ever showed himself more humble and lowly in the sight of his lady.

"Come now," I said to him, "how does she behave when she is with you?"

"She never is with me. I am in the room, so is she, and yet we are not together.

"I speak to her, she answers me, but I cannot say that I

have ever talked to her She does not avoid me, she does not seek my company. . . . Yet I think she does avoid me, or at least that I am unacceptable to her. When a man is built that way!" And he railed at his poor self with a delightful simpleness.

Mlle. Bourgade's coldness toward so excellent a creature was unnatural. It could be accounted for only by the first promptings of love, or by deliberate and calculated coyness.

"Does Mlle. Bourgade know that you have come into property?"

"No."

"She thinks you are poor like her?"

"But for that I should have been shown the door long ago."

"If, however. . . . Don't blush. If by any impossible chance she should love you as you love her, what would you do?"

"I . . . would tell her. . . ."

"Come, no false shame! She is not here: you would marry her?"

"Oh! if only I could! But I shall never dare to marry."

This took place one Sunday. On the Thursday following, though I had solemnly promised to avoid the Rue Traversine, I called on Petit-Gris. I had put on my finest uniform coat, with brand-new palm leaves at the button-hole. A staunch friend had lent me a pair of gloves.

Petit-Gris went and informed Mme. Bourgade that a gentleman asked the favour of a few moments' talk with her alone. She came just as she was, and our host went out, under the pretext of buying some coal.

Mme. Bourgade was a tall, handsome woman, exceedingly thin; she had long, sad eyes, fine eyebrows, and glorious hair, but hardly any teeth left, which made her look old. She stopped in front of me, a little confused: poverty is shy.

"Madam," I said to her, "I am a friend of Matthew

Debay: he loves your daughter, and he has the honour to ask your permission to propose to her."

That's the sort of diplomacy we used at the École Normale.

"Sit down, monsieur," she said to me quietly.

She was not surprised at my overture: she expected it. She knew that Matthew loved her daughter, and she admitted to me with a sort of maternal modesty that her daughter had for a long time loved Matthew.

I was quite sure of it!

She had deeply reflected on the possibility of this marriage. In one way she was happy to entrust her daughter's future to an honest man before she died. She thought herself dangerously ill, and attributed to organic causes a diminution of strength which had been due to privations.

What alarmed her was the notion that Matthew himself was not very robust, that he might one day take to his bed, lose his pupils, and be left without resources with a wife, perhaps with children, for it was necessary to provide against everything I could have put her at her ease by a single word, but I forbore.

I was only too happy to see a marriage arranged with that sublime imprudence of the poor who say: "First of all let us love one another, each day will bring its own bread!" Mme. Bourgade only discussed the matter with me for form's sake. Matthew had found the way to her heart.

Mme. Bourgade took me to her apartment and introduced me to her daughter. The fair Aimée was wearing a common print cotton dress, the colour of which was faded. She had neither cap, nor collar, nor cuffs; the laundry is so dear!

I was able to admire a thick plait of magnificent fair hair, a neck rather thin but passing graceful, and hands for which a lady of high degree would have given a lot. Her face was her mother's, with twenty years taken off.

As I saw them side by side I instinctively thought of those

architectural drawings wherein one sees in the same frame a temple in ruins and its restoration.

What astonished me most in the future Mme. Debay was the clear whiteness of her complexion. You would have said it was milk, and that a transparent milk. I can compare her face to nothing better than a fine pearl.

She was quite sincerely happy, was the little pearl of Rue Traversine, when she heard the news I brought. In the very midst of her joy appeared Matthew, who did not expect to find me there. He refused to believe that he was loved till it was repeated to him three times.

We all spoke at once, and Beethoven's quartettes are feeble music compared to the music we sang. Then as the door had remained ajar, I made off without saying anything. Matthew knew I was a bit of a tease, and he would not have dared to weep in my presence.

He was married on the first Thursday in June, and I took care not to be "gated," for I was anxious to act as witness for him. I shared this honour with a young writer who was then making his start in a young and hospitable review, the *Artiste*. Aimée's witnesses were two friends of Matthew, a painter and a professor: Mme. Bourgade had lost sight of her old acquaintances.

The municipal buildings of the 11th arrondissement face the church of Saint-Sulpice: there was only the square to cross. The whole of the wedding party, including Léonce, was packed into two large hackney carriages, in which we drove out to dine at Meudon.

Our dining-room was a summer-house surrounded by lilac, and we discovered a little bird which had made her nest in the moss above our heads. We drank to the prosperity of the winged family: happiness makes us all equal.

Let who will believe me, but Matthew's plain looks were gone. I had already observed that the air of the woods had the privilege of improving his looks. There are some faces

which appeal to us only in a drawing-room: you will find others which we delight in only in the country. The powdered dolls we admire in Paris would be hideous to meet in a woodland nook: the thought of it makes me shudder. Matthew was, on the contrary, a very presentable woodsman.

He informed us at dessert that he was going to start for Auray with his wife and his mother-in-law. Excellent Madame Debay was already opening her arms to receive her daughter-in-law. Matthew would write his theses at his leisure: he would be doctor and professor when the sardines permitted.

"Not to mention the children," added a voice which was not mine.

"Indeed," answered the bridegroom, "if children come to us, I shall teach them to read by the fireside, and may I have ten scholars in my class!"

"And I," said Léonce, "I dismiss you all till next year, when you will attend the wedding of Léonce Debay with Mademoiselle X, one of the richest heiresses in Paris."

"Three cheers for Mademoiselle X, the glorious unknown!"

"And till I know her," went on the orator, "you will be told that I have frittered away a fortune, squandered treasures, and scattered my heritage to the four winds of heaven. Remember what I promise you: I will scatter gold, but only as a sower scatters seed. Let them talk and wait for the crop!"

Why should I not admit that we were drinking champagne? Matthew said to his brother: "You will do as you wish. My doubting days are over. I think anything is possible since *she* could marry me for love."

But on the next Sunday at the railway station Matthew seemed less confident about his brother's future.

"You are going to play for high stakes," he said to him as they shook hands.

"Pooh! rely on me, brother: if there is an heiress left in the world she is meant for us."

"Anyhow, remember that whatever happens there is a bed ready for you in the house at Auray."

"Get them to add a pillow. We'll come and see you in our carriage!"

Petit-Gris looked Léonce up and down with an eye of approval which meant:

"Young man, I like your ambition."

But Léonce did not lower his eyes on Petit-Gris. He put his arm through mine after the train had started, and took me off to dine with him; he was in high spirits and full of hope.

"The die is cast," he said: "I am burning my boats. Yesterday I bespoke a delightful entresol in the Rue de Provence. The decorators are in; in a week I shall put the upholsterers in. And there, my dear old man, you will come and eat your chop of friendship on Sundays."

"What are you thinking of, beginning your campaign in the middle of summer? There's not a soul in Paris."

"I know what I'm doing. As soon as I am settled in my home I shall be off to the spa at Vichy. Acquaintances are soon picked up at spas; people become intimate and invite each other for next winter. I have thought it all out and my plans are made. In a fortnight I shall have done with that awful Latin Quarter."

"Where we've had such a good time!"

"We thought we were enjoying ourselves, because we were greenhorns. Do *you* find this chicken eatable?"

"Excellent, my dear chap."

"Awful! By the way, I've got a cook. A young man in quest of a wife dines in town, but lunches at home. I've still got to find a man-servant. You can't tell me of one?"

"Indeed, I'm sorry I shall be at the School for another eighteen months. I should have offered myself, so magnificent a master do I think you will make."

"My dear fellow, you are neither small enough nor big enough. I must have a colossus or a gnome. Stay where you are. Have you ever turned your thought upon liveries? That is a serious matter."

"Well! I've read Aristotle, the chapter on Hats."

"What would you think of a sky-blue great-coat with red facings?"

"We have also the uniform of the Pope's Swiss Guard: yellow, red and black, with a halberd. What do you say to that?"

"Stop it! I've reviewed every colour; black is highly respectable, with a cockade, but too severe; brown is not young enough; dark blue is discredited by trade: every bank messenger has a blue coat with white buttons. I shall think it over. Just have a look at my new visiting-cards."

"Léonce de Baÿ and a marquess's coronet! I will grant you the marquisate, which does no harm to anybody; but I think you would have done better to respect your old father's name. I am not a stickler, but it always vexes me a little to see an honourable man disguised as a marquess, except at Carnival time. It's a delicate way of disowning one's family. For you to be a marquess your father must be a duke, or dead. Choose between the two."

"Why take things so tragically? My dear and worthy father would laugh with all his heart to see his name thus caricatured. Don't you think that the diæresis over the y is a stroke of genius? That's what gives names an aristocratic touch! All that is wanted now is the armorial bearings. Do you know anything about heraldry?"

"Not much."

"You know enough about it to design me a coat of arms."

"Waiter, a bit of paper! There, this is the coat of arms I will give you. Quartered gold and gules; this represents lions gules on a field of gold, and that represents martlets gold on a field gules. Are you satisfied?"

"Delighted. What's a martlet?"

"A duck."

"Better and better. Now for a rather bold motto."

"BAŸ CAN NAUGHT DISMAŸ."

"Splendid! From this moment I owe you homage as my liege lord."

"Very well, then, trusted and well-beloved marquess, let us light a cigar, and escort me back to College."

III

Léonce spent the summer at Vichy and came back in October. He brought back a tall, fair man-servant and a magnificent black horse. This was the heritage of an Englishman who had died of melancholy while drinking the waters.

I was informed of his return through Jack the gorgeous, whose mouse-grey livery excited my admiration. Jack was wearing the Baÿ arms on his buttons, without paying me author's rights.

The grandest of all my friends reccived me in a suite of rooms which bore the imprint of a virile stylishness. None of the knick-knacks that betray the interference of a woman were to be seen in it: not even a chair worked in tapestry! The furniture of the dining-room was in oak; the drawing-room, in poppy-coloured satin, looked respectable, rich, and comfortable.

The study was dignified: you would have thought yourself in the sanctum of an author writing the history of the Crusades.

In the bedroom there met the eye a vast tapestry depicting the Clemency of Alexander, a wash-stand in white marble, a magnificent toilet outfit laid out in the most perfect order, four velvet-pile easy-chairs, and a four-post bedstead, the bed of a recluse, three feet wide at the most.

The pictures on the walls in no way belied the guarantees given by the furniture. In the drawing-room were land-

scapes. In the dining-room, a hunting scene, game, and paintings of still life.

In the study, a trophy made up of weapons, walking-sticks, and hunting-crops, and four large *passe-partout* frames filled with etchings.

In the bedroom, five or six ancestral portraits bought second-hand from the dealers in the Rue Jacob.

The furniture, pictures, engravings, and books, selected with scrupulous care, united in singing the praise of Léonce. He was ready for any mother-in-law who might come along!

My first object on entering was to look for the cigars, but Léonce had given up smoking. He said that the cigar, while bringing men together, has not the virtue of arranging marriages, and that tobacco equally offends women and bees, winged creatures both.

He gave me an account of his summer campaign and triumphantly showed me twenty-five or thirty visiting cards which represented as many invitations for the winter.

"Read all those names," he said to me, "and you'll see whether I have wasted my powder and shot."

I was astonished to see only names connected with banking and industry.

"Why this preference? Balzac's heroes used to visit the Faubourg Saint-Germain."

"They had their reasons," said Léonce; "I have my own for not visiting there. In the Chaussée d'Antin my name and my title can be of service to me; in the Faubourg Saint-Germain they would perhaps do me harm.

"Announce a marquess in a Rue Laffitte drawing-room, and fifty people will watch the door. In the Rue de l'Université nobody would even look up. The very lackeys think nothing of marquesses.

"And then all these nobles of long standing know one another, and are as thick as thieves: they would soon find out that I am not one of themselves. They would not ask

to see my title-deeds, but they would whisper in each other's ears that no one has ever seen them. The secret of my marquisate would be out, and I should be packed off to seek my fortune elsewhere.

"Besides, large fortunes are rare in that noble Faubourg. I have made inquiries: there are a hundred to a hundred and fifty, so old that everyone has heard of them, so clear, so patent, so well established in the light of day, that everybody desires them; wherefore there are twenty suitors round each heiress. What chance should I have as the twenty-first? You won't catch me at it.

"Now look at the right bank of the Seine: what a difference! In the drawing-room of the smallest banker or the most modest stockbroker you will see dancing in the same quadrille a dozen colossal fortunes, unknown to the public, and unknown to each other.

"One dates twenty years back, the other from yesterday. One comes from a sugar refinery in Auteuil, another from a works at Saint-Étienne, another from a factory at Mulhouse; one has come straight from Manchester, another has only just landed from Chandernagor.

"All the foreigners are to be found in the Chaussée d'Antin! Among that crowd, with its chinking gold and sparkling diamonds, people meet, make acquaintance, fall in love, and marry, in less time than it takes a duchess to open her snuff-box.

"There people know the value of time; there men are alive, restless, and in a hurry to act, like myself; there I shall cast my net in the noisy and seething waters!"

He recited to me a passage from Balzac's *Lis dans la Vallée*, which contained his rules of conduct; it was the last letter of Mme. de Mortsauf to young Vandenesse. Next we read over again Henri de Marsay's advice to Paul de Manerville; then he called for lunch; then he wasted two hours over dressing, exactly two hours, after the example of M. de Marsay.

I saw him often enough during the winter to observe how he practised his master's lessons.

He put in an appearance wherever and whenever people showed themselves. He galloped in the Bois de Boulogne every evening as punctually as if he had been paid to ride there. He never missed a first night at the theatres in good repute; he was assiduous in his attendance at the Italian Opera as if he had been a music lover. He refused no invitation, never missed a ball. Wherein I admired him.

His dress was exquisite, his boots were perfection, his linen was a marvel. I was ashamed to walk out with him even on Sundays, when we wore starched shirts. As for him, he willingly went out with me. He had hired for six months a brand-new brougham on which the carriage-builder had provisionally emblazoned his arms.

In society he gained credit at the very outset by possessing two talents which seldom go together: he was a dancer and a talker. He danced so exquisitely that someone said he showed wit to the tips of his toes.

All the girls who danced with him were delighted with themselves, and consequently with him. Mothers, also, always have a good word to say for a man who shows off their daughters. But when, after a waltz or a quadrille, he went and sat down among ladies of a certain age, the liking they had for him turned to enthusiasm.

He had too much good taste to hurl compliments at people's heads, but he suggested ideas to the minds of his fair listeners, and the most stupid of them became quite witty by coming in contact with his wit. He severely denied himself the pleasures of scandal-mongering, brought nobody into ridicule, allowed foolish utterances to pass unchallenged, and joked on all subjects without hurting anyone's feelings; which is not always an easy matter.

But if he was pleasing in the presence of ladies, he was just as cold in his dealings with men. His stiffness bordered on impertinence. It was one more method of paying court

to those from whom he expected everything: a roundabout way of saying to them: "I live for you alone."

The weaker sex appreciates the homage of the strong, and it is a double pleasure to bring down the head of pride. His haughtiness was too affected to pass unnoticed, and it involved him in quarrels. He fought three duels, and, like a gentleman, inflicted on his adversaries mere sword-pricks; the worst sufferer of the three was laid up for a fortnight.

The world gave Léonce as much credit for his moderation as for his bravery, and everyone acknowledged him to be a sportsman, who exposed his own life while sparing the lives of others.

This was, moreover, the only play he indulged in. Even if Mme. de Mortsauf's letter had not warned him against card-playing, he himself would have forborne in the interest of his reputation and of his finances.

With his money he was open-handed but circumspect. He never refused to subscribe to a charity concert or lottery; no frequenter of Parisian drawing-rooms was a more generous contributor to good deeds. He knew when to empty his purse into some lady collector's bag, when to put his name down for twenty louis in the collecting book of a lady bent on some charitable mission.

He spent much for show and very little for pleasure, reckoning any disbursement without publicity as useless. Therein especially did he differ from his models, the Rubemprés and the de Marsays, who were pleasure-seekers and high livers. He incurred no debts, avoiding anything that might check him in his course. He desired to arrive at his goal without delay and without reproach.

Despite all these praiseworthy efforts he went through three months of the winter and 35,000 francs of his money without finding what he was looking for.

When I paid him my visit at the new year, he reviewed the three months which had just passed. As yet he had come across none but impossible matches—a giddy widow more

or less ruined; a Russian princess, wealthier indeed, but encumbered with three children by her first marriage; and the daughter of a speculator of doubtful repute.

"I can't make it out," he said to me with a certain bitterness. "I have friends and no enemies; I know all Paris and am well known: I go everywhere, I am a favourite everywhere; I have made a good start, I have even got a good footing, but I meet with no success! I make straight for my object without halting by the way: yet my goal seems to recede before me.

"If I were seeking the impossible, one might account for it; but what is it I am looking out for? A woman in my own sphere who shall love me for myself. That is nothing out of the way! Matthew has found in his world what I am vainly seeking for in mine. Yet I am quite as good as Matthew."

"Physically, anyhow. Do you get any news of them?"

"Not often: the happy are selfish. The licentiate is improving his land; he is marling, sowing buck-wheat, planting trees, and a hundred other fooleries! His wife is as well as can be expected. Matthew the Second is due to arrive in April."

"No need to ask you if they are still in love with each other?"

"A real Noah's Ark! Papa and mamma are on their knees before their daughter-in-law. Mme. Bourgade has made a good impression: it appears that she is decidedly a genteel woman. They are all busy, they all enjoy themselves and worship each other: they are happy."

"You have never had a fancy to run down and join them with what is left of your crown pieces?"

"Indeed, no! I prefer my perplexities to their pleasures. Besides, it is not yet time for me to go and hide myself."

And, true enough, a week later he turned up beaming in the College reception-room.

"Brrr!" he said, "not very warm here!"

"Fifteen degrees [Centigrade], old chap, that's the regulation."

"The regulations are not so chilly as I am, and I did well to fail in the exam., all the more so as I am nearing my objective."

"You are on the right road?"

"I have found her!"

Léonce had noted the gracefulness and stylishness of a tiny little woman, so fragile and so minute that her perfections could only fairly be admired through a microscope. He had waltzed with her and had all but lost her several times, so light was she when she rested on her partner's arm. He had talked with her, and still remained under the spell.

Léonce asked the name of this young lady who looked so like a humming-bird. He was told that she was neither wife nor widow, in spite of appearances, and that her name was Mademoiselle de Stock. The world gave her five-and-twenty years of age and a large fortune. On this information Léonce fell in love with her.

In civilized communities naturalists recognize two varieties of love.

One is a wild plant which seeds spontaneously in the heart, develops untended, casts its roots in the very deepest of our being, withstands wind and rain, hail and frost, grows again if torn out, borrowing from Nature invincible vigour and tenacity.

The other is a garden plant which we cultivate ourselves, either for its flowers or for its fruit.

Sometimes a mother sows it in the soul of her daughter to prepare her gradually for a brilliant marriage; sometimes we see two families, anxious to be united by a close bond, hoeing and watering in their children's hearts a little garden passion.

Sometimes an ambitious young man, like Léonce, applies himself to developing in his bosom the germs of a love which promises a golden harvest.

This variety, more common than the first-named, is found under cultivation in the Paris drawing-rooms; but, like all garden plants, it is delicate, and requires much attention; cold it seldom resists, and starvation never.

Léonce had Baron de Stock pointed out to him; the Baron was playing at écarté and losing large sums of money with the indifference of a millionaire. Whereat Mlle. de Stock seemed to him prettier than ever. The baron was wearing a rather handsome string of foreign decorations. "His daughter is adorable," thought Léonce.

He got himself introduced to the baroness, a noble German doll covered with old smoked diamonds. He liked this worthy dame at the first glance. Perhaps he would have thought her rather ridiculous if she had not had such a witty daughter.

Perhaps too he would have thought Mlle. de Stock somewhat wanting in refinement if he had not known her to have so majestic a mother.

He danced a whole evening with the fair Dorothy, and murmured in her ear words of gallantry which were very much like words of love. She replied with a sauciness that did not sound like hate. The baroness, after making inquiries, invited Léonce to her Wednesdays: he became a constant attender.

M. de Stock lived in the Rue de La Rochefoucauld, in a little mansion of which he was the owner. Léonce was a connoisseur in personal property ever since he had bought furniture himself. Without being an expert he was a judge of good style.

He might make mistakes like anybody else, for it requires an auctioneer and valuer to distinguish between an artistic bronze and a cheap casting, and to guess whether a piece of furniture is padded with hair or economically stuffed with oakum.

Yet he wasn't quite a fool, and the baron's home delighted him. The upkeep of the house represented an expenditure

of sixty thousand francs per annum. The day Léonce was welcomed by the baron, received with open arms by the baroness, and tenderly regarded by their daughter, he was able to say without presumption: "I have found what I was looking for!"

About the middle of January he got to know that Dorothy was to collect for the poor at Notre-Dame de Lorette, and although he was not much of a church-goer, he showed exemplary punctuality. He rushed me through luncheon and dragged me off with him on the stroke of one o'clock.

I have forgotten the details of his attire, but I do recollect that he was resplendent. I recognized Mlle. de Stock by the description he had given me of her, though he had omitted to tell me that she was as dark as any Maltese. A dark German woman is a phenomenon rare enough to deserve mention. At the conclusion of Mass the congregation filed out one by one past the collectors, who were kneeling at each door of the church.

Dorothy besought the charity of the passers with a glance of interrogation and a truly worldly charm. I put a penny in her red velvet bag, the poor student's mite. Léonce bowed to the collector as if he were in a drawing-room, and gave a thousand-franc note folded in four.

"How much have you left?" I asked him in the porch.

"Thirteen thousand francs and a few centimes."

"That's not much."

"Quite enough. The alms I have just given will be restored to me a hundred-fold. *Centuplum accipies.*"

I returned no answer; I was thinking of Matthew's poor ten francs.

On the way back to the Rue de Provence my charitable friend gave me some idea of life in the country seats of the German nobility. He depicted to me those grand banquets washed down with wines of Tokai and Johannisberg, those gatherings bedizened with uniforms and ribbands, those salons wherein the court-dress of the Duke of Richelieu

is still the fashion; and those marvellous hunting parties, those grand shoots after which the hares are counted by the thousand, and the venison is sold in butchers' shops for a hundred miles round.

On getting home he found a letter from his brother, a very short one:

"How can I describe it all to you?" wrote Matthew. "Our life is as smooth as a mirror: all our days are as much alike as drops of milk in the same bowl. Work has stopped for the winter and we spend the day by the fireside, just ourselves.

"You know how spacious the fireside is: there is room for all; by crowding together a little we might even set one arm-chair more, if you would like. Papa pokes the fire unmercifully. You know his passion, the only passion of his life. If we took the tongs from him we should make him a very unhappy man.

"Mamma Debay and Mamma Bourgade spend the day stitching baby garments with shoulder-straps, and embroidering tiny bonnets. Aimée knits cashmere stockings, real dolls' stockings.

"When I see all these preparations I have a mind to laugh and cry. The dear little creature will have a royal set of baby-clothes.

"The family council has decided that if it should be a boy, it should be called Léonce: your name will bring him good luck. I hope he won't take it into his head to be like his father! We have put your portrait in our bedroom.

"As for myself, there is no change in me, except that I do hardly any work now. The celebrated theses have not made much progress: I have got as far as the death of Pericles in the Peloponnesian War, *De bello Peloponnesiaco*, and 'Corneille, comic author' has come to a stop at *Clitandre*. So much the worse for the Faculty of Rennes! It will have to wait.

"Ah! brother, if you only knew how insipid your pleasures

are compared with ours! You would come by the stage-coach and would spare us the carriage that you threatened us with. You alone are missing from the circle; you are our only anxiety. Papa puts on his heavy frown when the Rue de Provence is mentioned. But after all, I cheer him up by telling him that if any man in this world ought to get on, it is you."

"They are a decent lot," said Léonce, throwing the letter down on his writing-table. "They will soon hear of me."

A few days later the baron suddenly burst in upon him at ten o'clock in the morning. Such a step augured well. M. de Stock examined the rooms with the eye of a connoisseur, and took mental stock of the furniture.

Any practically-minded man would have thought he was under the roof of a gentleman's son: the baron was delighted. This German was a pleasant fellow. Everybody knew that he had been a banker at Frankfort-on-the-Main, and yet he never spoke of his fortune. Nobody disputed his nobility, and yet he never spoke of his titles.

His castles, his lands, his forests were things to which he seemed never to give a thought. Never did he say a word about them to Léonce, and by this token Léonce recognized that he was really a man of wealth and really a nobleman.

On his side, too, Léonce had too much good taste to lay any claim to an illusory fortune. He allowed free play to people's imagination, and never disputed with anyone who said to him: "You who are a wealthy man." But he did not brag. When he mentioned his family he said unaffectedly:

"My people live on their Brittany estate."

Wherein he lied not.

I pointed out to him that everything would be found out in the long run, and that he would be obliged to confess the origin of his nobility and the slenderness of his fortune.

"Leave it to me," he replied; "the baron is rich enough

to allow his daughter a love match. Dorothy loves me, I am sure of that; she has told me so. When the parents see that I am necessary to the happiness of their daughter, they will overlook many things. Besides, I shall deceive nobody, and they shall know everything before the wedding-day."

He did not pay his suit to Mlle. de Stock in public, but he saw her every evening in society. The charm of their intimacy was only increased by its being kept somewhat under constraint.

Constraint is a marvellous force which doubles the pleasures of the heart as it does the powers of the mind. It is constraint which gives to a thought expressed in verse a beauty which it lacks in prose.

Léonce and Dorothy wrote to each other every day, in verse and in prose, and it was amusing to see them exchanging their notes under cover of a handkerchief or behind a fan. The baroness enjoyed these little tricks; she had given her daughter's heart free rein, and she permitted her to love M. de Baÿ.

In the last days of February Léonce plucked up courage: he proposed. M. and Mme. de Stock, warned by Dorothy, received him in solemn audience.

"Monsieur le Baron, Madame la Baronne," said he, "I have the honour to ask the hand of mademoiselle your daughter. To leave you in no doubt as to my position . . ."

The baron interrupted him with a lordly wave of the hand:

"Stop there, Monsieur le Marquis, I beg of you. All Paris knows you, and my daughter loves you: I want to know nothing more. Even if your name were obscure, even if your father had squandered his fortune, I should still say to you: 'Dorothy is yours.'"

He embraced Léonce, and the baroness gave him her hand to kiss.

"You do not know," said the baroness, "our romantic

Germany. That's how we all are . . . at least in the upper class."

Amid a paroxysm of joy Léonce felt within his heart a revulsion of honest feeling. "I cannot deceive these good people," he said to himself, "and I should be a scoundrel if I took advantage of their good faith." He continued aloud: "Monsieur le Baron, the noble confidence which you show me compels me to give you a few details about . . ."

"Monsieur le Marquis, you would seriously grieve me if you persisted any further. I should believe that you are only bent on giving me these details in order to oblige me to furnish proofs of my rank and fortune."

The baroness supported these words by a friendly gesture which meant: "Do not insist, he is touchy."

"Well, then," thought Léonce, "we'll talk of it later. We shall enter into mutual explanations, willy-nilly, on the day the contract is signed."

But the baron would not hear of a contract.

"Between gentlemen," said he, "these engagements, these signatures, these guarantees are humiliating safeguards. Do you love Dorothy? Yes. Does she love you? I am certain of it. Then what is the good of setting up a lawyer between you? I imagine your love will do very well without any stamped paper."

"Nevertheless, monsieur, if you had been misled as to my position . . ."

"But, you terrible child, I have not been misled, I have not been told anything. I know nothing about you except that my daughter, my wife, myself, and all the world like you. I want to know nothing more. Do I want your money? If you are wealthy, so much the better. If you are poor, so much the worse. Do you say the same of me, and we are quits.

"Look here, this will ease your conscience: you have nothing, my daughter has nothing: your name is Léonce,

her name is Dorothy, and I give you my paternal blessing. Are you satisfied?"

Léonce wept for joy. Dorothy was called in.

"Come, my daughter," said the baroness, "come and tell the marquess that you marry neither his name nor his fortune, but himself."

"Dear Léonce," said Dorothy, "I love you dearly!"

There was not one syllable of untruth in what she said.

Léonce was married in March. It was high time: the wedding gifts swallowed up his last thousand-franc note. I did not act as witness this time: the witnesses were somebodies.

Dorothy was adorable in her white dress of corded velvet, and scored a great success. People called her the little dark angel. After the ceremony a dinner for forty was served at the baron's, and Léonce did me the kindness to invite me to it. He introduced me to his wife when we rose after dinner.

"My dear Dorothy," he said to her, "this is one of my old comrades who will one of these days be the schoolmaster of our children. I hope you will always give him a hearty welcome: one's best friends are not the most brilliant but the staunchest."

"Monsieur le Professeur," said the fair Dorothy, "you will always be welcome at our house. I wish Léonce to bestow on me in marriage all his friends. Can you speak German?"

"No, Madam, to my deep shame. I shall always regret not being able to read *Hermann and Dorothea* in the original."

"It is no great loss, I assure you. A bombastic pastoral: a pipe tune played on a tuba. You have better things than that in France. Do you like Balzac? He's my man!"

IV

The pretty marchioness's conversation and the pleasure of dancing in my heavy boots made me forget the College regulations. I got back an hour late and I was gated for a fortnight. As soon as I was free again my first visit was to Léonce. I found him by himself, engaged in tearing his hair, which was very fine, as you know.

"Old man," he said in a piteous voice, "I have been cruelly deceived."

"Already!"

"My father-in-law is as rich as I am, as noble as I am: his name is Stock in one syllable, and all the wealth he possesses is about twenty thousand francs of debts."

"You don't say so!"

"The thing is beyond doubt: my wife made a clean breast of it on the evening of our wedding. There were not five hundred francs in the house."

"But the house alone is worth a hundred thousand!"

"It isn't paid for. M. Stock was rich five or six years ago: he held a certain rank at Frankfort, and his liquidation had left him over thirty thousand francs a year.

"But he is as great a gambler as the knave of diamonds himself. He lost everything at roulette, trente et quarante, and those innocent games that Germany uses so well to rob us.

"At the beginning of winter there remained to him of all his splendour a row of ribands and crosses bought cheap in the petty courts of Northern Germany, a few honourable connections, the habit of spending money, a rage for gambling, and a matter of fifty thousand francs. He thought it clever to lay out this capital on Dorothy, and come to Paris to stake his last farthing.

"He counted on fishing in turbid waters, in that infernal society of the Chaussée d'Antin, for a son-in-law rich enough to take his daughter off his hands, to support him and his

wife, and to give him every summer a few rolls of louis to gamble away on the banks of the Rhine. Isn't it infamous?"

"Take care," I said to him. "Do you know how he is talking about you at this moment?"

"Oh! what a difference! *I* never deceived him. I wanted to explain to him candidly the state of my affairs. It was he who stopped me, who closed my mouth. I know why now, and I am no longer surprised at the trust he put in me! It was he who dragged me into the gulf in which we are both wallowing."

"Has any explanation taken place between you?"

"I rushed to his house to tackle him about it, and you may take it from me that I did not mince my words. Do you know what his answer was? Instead of recriminating, as I had expected, he took me by the hand and in a voice full of emotion said:

"'We are unlucky. Each of us might have gone his own way and found a fortune: it is very unfortunate that we met.'"

"A very sensible remark."

"What is to happen to me?"

"Is it advice you are asking me for?"

"Of course, considering you can't give me anything else!"

"My dear Léonce, I know only one honourable way out of your difficulty. Be a man and sell up: go and hide away in some hard-working district, say the Rue des Ursulines or the Boulevard Montparnasse; complete your legal studies, pass your licentiate examination, become a barrister.

"You have talent; you can't have entirely lost the habit of working; the connections you have formed these last six months will be of use to you later on; you will make up lost time, and your money too."

"Yes, if I was a bachelor! My poor friend, it is easy to see that you live boxed up in your school; you know nothing of life. Balzac proved long ago that an unmarried

man can succeed in anything, but that once married you wear out your strength in struggling meanly against kitchen bills and the household account-book.

"You want me to work cheek by jowl with a wife, a father-in-law, a mother-in-law, and the children who may come after, family-ridden and penned up with all this crowd in a flat at four hundred francs! It would be the death of me!"

"Well, then, do something else. Take your new family into Brittany. Your Uncle Yvon's house is big enough to take you all in; they will put an extra leaf in the table and add an extra dish for dinner."

"We shall ruin them!"

"Not at all. Aimée will buy herself one dress less every year, and Matthew will prolong the existence of his good old brown coat."

"Oh! I know their kind hearts. But you don't know my parents-in-law. If my wife loves society, her parents are mad about it. Mme. Stock spends hours before her glass making curtseys! M. Stock will never make a passable Breton. He would chafe under their hospitality and would put our dear house to shame; he would reproach us with the bread we gave him!"

"Well! leave the parents to disentangle themselves in Paris. Carry off your wife; she is young and you will train her."

"But just think! the old man is up to the ears in debt! After all, he is my father-in-law. I can't leave him on the high road to the sponging-house!"

"Let him sell his furniture! he has more than twenty thousand francs' worth."

"And what will they live on, poor things?"

"I note with pleasure that you are sorry for them. But I will say in my turn: 'What are you going to do? I don't know what course to advise you to adopt, and I am at my wits' end.'"

"I'll go and ask for some appointment. People think I don't want one, and so they will give it me."

He begged for a long time, and lost over a month in useless applications. When his troubles were at their height he heard that Aimée was mother of a bouncing boy.

"You shall be his godfather," wrote Matthew, "and pretty Aunt Dorothy will not refuse to be godmother. We await your arrival: your bed is ready: make haste and get the horses put to the carriage."

Léonce had not yet recounted his mishap to his father and mother. What was the good of casting bad news athwart their happiness? The poor fellow showed more pluck than I could have hoped. Whilst he was selling his pictures for food he was loving and attentive to his wife.

His present straits, the uncertainty of the future, and the regret at having made such a bad speculation did not long discompose his natural good humour: at least he had the good taste to hide his disappointment. It is right to say that Dorothy did her best to comfort him. If she sometimes wept it was on the sly.

She restored to the dealers part of the wedding presents. I am willing to believe that the honeymoon would have been brighter if the young couple had wanted for nothing and if M. Stock had had no debts; but in spite of all sorts of difficulties and the dunning of the creditors their love held.

Léonce and Dorothy clung to each other like children caught in a storm. They were as happy as anyone can be in a boat leaking at every seam. I saw them regularly every time I went out, and each visit revealed them more worthy and made them dearer to me.

One Thursday about half-past one I was just starting from College to go to their house when I met in the Rue d'Ulm a little man in a velvet jacket. He was an old acquaintance whom I had somewhat neglected ever since Matthew's marriage.

"Good-day, Petit-Gris," I said. "Put your cap on again. Were you coming to see me?"

"Yes, sir, and I am very glad I have met you to ask your advice."

"Nothing wrong with you? Your wife is well? You are still working for the city of Paris?"

"Yes, still at work, sir, and I venture to say that my wife and I can handle the broom in a way that does you credit. You will never be taken to task for having got us our jobs."

"It was not my doing, Petit-Gris, it was a young friend of mine, to whom I should very much like to do a similar good turn."

"M. Matthew is still happy? The ladies are not ill?"

"Thank you. Matthew has a boy, and the whole family are as well as possible."

"Well then, sir, I'll tell you what has happened. This morning as we were coming back from work and my wife was just going to lift the soup which she had put in the bed to keep warm, in came a gentleman, not very tall, in fact rather short, a man of my build and pretty much of the same age as myself.

"He asked me if I was living in the house at the same time as Mme. Bourgade. I told him the facts of the case, since I have nothing to hide, do no harm, and owe no man anything. But when he found out that I knew the ladies, he began to question me on one thing and another, and who the young lady's husband was, and what he did for his living, and what she ate for dinner, and how long she had stayed in the district, and finally where she was living.

"When I saw that he had a notion of pumping me I refused to answer any more. I didn't take to the fellow! He kept looking at the house with the eyes of a rich man: you would have thought that our room made him sick!

"I understood right enough that he was anxious to have M. Matthew's address, but I didn't know what he wanted

it for. I said I didn't know it, but it was perhaps possible to get hold of it.

"Thereupon he promised to pay me well if I would get it for him.

"'Sir,' I replied, 'I have no need to be paid. I have two Government situations.'

"He left me his address, which I did not read (you understand why), and I am come to show it to you in order to know what to do."

Petit-Gris pulled out of his pocket a handsome, glossy visiting-card, on which I read:

LOUIS BOURGADE

Hôtel des Princes.

"Louis Bourgade!" said Petit-Gris, "why, he's a relation."

"Hôtel des Princes! he's a rich relation."

"He might have come sooner, when the poor ladies were dying of hunger! They don't want him now."

"That is probably why he shows his face, my dear Petit-Gris: he must have heard of Mlle. Aimée's marriage. But there is a pardon for every sin: we shall have to give him the address."

"Well, I'll go. Is it far, the Hôtel des Princes?"

"Don't put yourself out: it is on my way, I will look in as I go by, and I will have a word with the gentleman. Good-bye for the present: if he should have any news I would let you know."

On my way I thought: "A rich relation! Such a lucky find will not fall in Léonce's way!"

I asked for M. Bourgade, and at once a servant of the hotel set off in front of me to show me the way. M. Bourgade occupied a magnificent suite of rooms on the first floor, overlooking the street. I understood his disdain for the hovels in Rue Traversine. His lordship kept me waiting ten minutes, which I conscientiously spent in cursing him.

I felt a violent indignation boiling up within me, after the manner of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

"Ah! scoundrel," I said to myself, "you are a relation of theirs, and you put up at the Hôtel des Princes! Your name is Bourgade, and you keep me kicking my heels!"

When the door opened I released the sluice-gates of my oratory. I was young. I hardly took the trouble to look at the person I was addressing: I used my eyes only for the purpose of flashing thunderbolts. I proudly introduced myself as an old friend of M. and Mme. Bourgade.

I related how I had gained admittance to their intimacy, without having the honour of being one of the family; I drew a pathetic picture of their poverty, their courage, their work, their virtue.

You may believe that I laid the colours on thick and did not deal in half-tints! I made a point of often repeating the name Bourgade, and every time I underlined it.

My speech for the prosecution was not without effect. M. Bourgade did not look me in the face: he hid his head in his hands and seemed overwhelmed.

As a finishing touch I acquainted him with Matthew's conduct: I told him the tale of the cloak pawned for ten francs, and all the privations which that estimable young man had undergone although he was not one of the family and his name was not Bourgade.

Excellent Matthew! he drew on his necessaries of life, while so many others are niggardly of their superfluity! Finally he had married this deserted orphan girl: he had taken her to Auray, to the house of his ancestors; he had given her a name, a fortune, a family!

To-day, Aimée Bourgade, a happy wife, a happy mother, had no more need of anybody and could in her turn snap her fingers at the selfish world that had slighted her.

M. Bourgade removed his hands and I saw his face bathed in tears.

"She is my daughter," he said; "I thank you heartily for loving her so. My dear boy! let me embrace you!"

I did not require twice telling. I never asked him how or why he was alive; I addressed him neither questions nor objections; I put my arms round his neck and I kissed him four or five times on both cheeks. I was certain I had made no mistake: a father's tears! you can tell them at any time!

Nevertheless, when the first emotion was over, I looked at him with an air of profound astonishment, and he saw it. "I will explain everything to you," he said to me, "when I have seen my wife and daughter. I am all haste for Auray. Thank you: good-bye: we will meet again shortly."

"Stop, if you please! I can't let you go yet. First of all, you cannot start till this evening by the seven o'clock train; next, there are certain precautions to take, and you must not go and land without warning in the public square at Auray. You would kill your wife and daughter, and the Breton peasants would pitchfork you to death: a ghost!

"Sit down here, and tell me your story. Then I will tell you what precautions you are to take. But how does it happen that you escaped from the wreck? On what stump of a mast? On what hen-coop?"

"Indeed, nothing is simpler. When the ship was lost I was no longer on board. You know what I was going to do in America. We stopped a week at Rio de Janeiro to take in passengers and goods. I went ashore like everybody else.

"I had letters of introduction for some French people there, and among others one for a certain dealer in dyewood named Charlier. We chatted: I explained my system: he was struck with it: all minds were turned toward California.

"Charlier assured me that my invention was a splendid

one, but that I was not strong enough to work it by myself, and that I should find no workmen.

" ' Try a better plan,' he said to me, ' come on shore with bag and baggage: set up as machine manufacturer, and push your *Bourgade Separator* here. The apparatus complete will come to five hundred francs, you will sell it at a thousand. All the gold-diggers bound for San Francisco will deal with you as they pass through.

" ' Believe me, this is the real California. You have no money to start the undertaking, but we'll raise some for you; a good thing always finds capital, especially in America. And if you want a partner, here I am! '

" Thus it was we founded the firm of Charlier, Bourgade and Co., the stock of which is quoted on the Paris Exchange. We issued it in 500-franc shares, and I have a thousand to my book. They have risen to ten times their original value, and they won't stop at that. New mines are spoken of in Australia."

" What! " I said, " you have made five millions? "

" Better than that, but what matter! Tell me by what miracle of misfortune all my letters have been left unanswered? "

" You will recover them at the post office. The news of the wreck of the *Belle Antoinette* was soon known in Paris. Your first letter must have arrived a few days later, when the ladies had left the Rue d'Orléans.

" If I remember right, they removed without giving their address: they wanted to hide their poverty, and besides they did not expect any further news from anybody. How could the post office have found them out? The postman doesn't go once in a week to the Rue Traversine."

" You haven't an idea of what I've suffered: writing for over two years without receiving one word in reply! "

" Come! come! I have seen two women suffering just as much as you."

" No; they wept over a positive misfortune: but *I* pictured

a thousand imaginary ones. I knew they were resourceless, exposed to all the privations and all the promptings of poverty: I was rich and could do nothing for them! That accursed cholera of 1849 gave me many a sleepless night.

"I wanted to come to Paris to inquire of the police, to ransack the whole town; but I was held to the business! I put an announcement in the *Presse* and the *Constitutionnel*, but nobody replied. Don't you ever read the papers?"

"Not often; and the ladies, never."

"I used to read them all, and it was a good thing I did so. It was the *Siècle* that informed me of Aimée's marriage."

"The point now is to inform her of your return. But gently, if you please: she is nursing her child. If you take my advice, you will let an ambassador go before you. I just happen to know a young man in search of a job: he is Matthew's brother, Aimée's brother-in-law; a man of intelligence to boot and worthy of representing a great power.

"If you are satisfied with his services I shall let you know how to pay off your indebtedness. Shall we look him up?"

A few hours later M. Bourgade, Léonce, and Dorothy took their seats in a handsome post-chaise which the railway conveyed to Angers.

At Vannes M. Bourgade put up at the hotel. The newly-wedded pair continued their journey, and arrived in a carriage, as Léonce had foretold.

When Dorothy expressed, in vague terms, the idea that perhaps M. Bourgade was not dead, the widow replied: "Perhaps!" She had grown so used to happiness that to her nothing appeared impossible.

Léonce recalled to mind what the student at the Engineering College had once told me as to the *separator*. If the invention had survived, the inventor might possibly have escaped from the wreck.

Hope flowed back in gentle waves into those brave hearts,

and the day on which M. Bourgade made his appearance at Auray his wife and daughter exclaimed with touching simplicity:

"We were quite sure you were not dead!"

M. Bourgade has not the outward appearance of a noble lord: far from it! but neither has he the manners of an upstart. If you met him out walking you would think you saw an honest jeweller from the Rue d'Orléans. The excellent little man deserved to have such a son-in-law as Matthew.

He has given his daughter a marriage portion of two millions, to the great embarrassment of Matthew, who says: "I am an adventurer; I have made improper use of my personal advantages to make a wealthy marriage."

The Debays have built themselves a princely habitation, and what adds to the beauty of their mansion is that there are no poor in the neighbourhood.

Matthew has finished his theses and won his doctor's degree: we have not in France two doctors as rich as he is, we have not four as hard-working.

Aimée gives her husband a child each year. Léonce has no more thought of imitating M. de Marsay; he has two daughters and something of a corporation. For these reasons he lives in Brittany, in the bosom of his family. He has a hundred thousand francs a year since Matthew has that sum.

M. and Mme. Stock have crossed the Atlantic; M. Bourgade has given them a situation in his factory.

Petit-Gris and his wife have left the Rue Traversine; if you want to make their acquaintance you will have to take the road to Auray. They have not lost their admirable knack with the broom, of which they were so proud; they keep the mansion clean and lead the dust a fine dance.

Five or six times a year I receive news of my friends. Only yesterday they sent me a hamper of oysters and a case of sardines. The sardines were good, but the oysters had opened on the way.

JULES VERNE

(1828–1905)

A DRAMA IN THE AIR

In the month of September, 185–, I arrived at Frankfort-on-the-Maine. My passage through the principal German cities had been brilliantly marked by balloon ascents; but as yet no German had accompanied me in my car, and the fine experiments made at Paris by MM. Green, Eugène Godard and Poitevin had not tempted the grave Teutons to essay aerial voyages.

But scarcely had the news of my approaching ascent spread through Frankfort than three of the principal citizens begged the favour of being allowed to ascend with me. Two days afterwards we were to start from the Place de la Comédie. I began at once to get my balloon ready. It was of silk, prepared with gutta-percha, a substance impermeable by acids or gases; and its volume, which was three thousand cubic yards, enabled it to ascend to the loftiest heights.

The day of the ascent was that of the great September fair, which attracts so many people to Frankfort. Lighting gas of a perfect quality and of great lifting power had been furnished to me in excellent condition, and about eleven o'clock the balloon was filled; but only three-quarters filled—an indispensable precaution, for as one rises the atmosphere diminishes in density, and the fluid enclosed within the balloon, acquiring more elasticity, might burst its sides. My calculations had furnished me with exactly the quantity of gas necessary to carry up my companions and myself.

We were to start at noon. The impatient crowd which

pressed around the enclosed space, filling the enclosed square, overflowing into the contiguous streets and covering the houses from the ground floor to the slated gables, presented a striking scene. The high winds of the preceding days had subsided. An oppressive heat fell from the cloudless sky. Scarcely a breath animated the atmosphere. In such weather one might descend again upon the very spot whence he had risen.

I carried three hundred pounds of ballast in bags; the car, quite round, four feet in diameter, was comfortably arranged; the hempen cords which supported it stretched symmetrically over the upper hemisphere of the balloon; the compass was in place, the barometer suspended in the circle which united the supporting cords, and the anchor carefully put in order. All was now ready for the ascent.

Among those who pressed around the enclosure, I remarked a young man with a pale face and agitated features. The sight of him impressed me. He was an eager spectator of my ascents, whom I had already met in several German cities. With an uneasy air, he closely watched the curious machine, as it lay motionless a few feet above the ground; and he remained silent among those about him.

Twelve o'clock came. The moment had arrived, but my travelling companions did not appear.

I sent to their houses, and learnt that one had left for Hamburg, another for Vienna, and the third for London. Their courage had failed them at the moment of undertaking one of those excursions which, thanks to the ability of living aeronauts, are free from all danger. As they formed in some sort a part of the programme of the day, the fear had seized them that they might be forced to execute it faithfully, and they had fled far from the scene at the instant when the balloon was being filled. Their courage was evidently the inverse ratio of their speed—in decamping.

The multitude here deceived showed not a little ill-humour. I did not hesitate to ascend alone. In order to

re-establish the equilibrium between the specific gravity of the balloon and the weight which had thus proved wanting, I replaced my companions by more sacks of sand, and got into the car. The twelve men who held the balloon by twelve cords fastened to the equatorial circle let them slip a little between their fingers, and the balloon rose several feet higher. There was not a breath of wind and the atmosphere was so leaden that it seemed to forbid the ascent.

"Is everything ready?" I cried.

The men put themselves in readiness. A last glance told me I might go.

"Attention!"

There was a movement in the crowd, which seemed to be invading the enclosure.

"Let go!"

The balloon rose slowly, but I experienced a shock which threw me to the bottom of the car.

When I got up, I found myself face to face with an unexpected fellow-voyager—the pale young man.

"Monsieur, I salute you," said he with the utmost coolness.

"By what right——"

"Am I here? By the right which the impossibility of your getting rid of me confers."

I was amazed! His calmness put me out of countenance, and I had nothing to reply. I looked at the intruder, but he took no notice of my astonishment.

"Does my weight disarrange your equilibrium, monsieur?" he asked. "You will permit me——"

And without waiting for my consent, he relieved the balloon of two bags, which he threw into space.

"Monsieur," said I, taking the only course now possible, "you have come; very well, you will remain; but to me alone belongs the management of the balloon."

"Monsieur," said he, "your urbanity is French all over: it comes from my own country. I morally press the hand

you refuse me. Make all precautions, and act as it seems best to you. I will wait till you have done."

"For what?"

"To talk with you."

The barometer had fallen to twenty-six inches. We were nearly six hundred yards above the city; but nothing betrayed the horizontal displacement of the balloon, for the mass of air in which it is enclosed goes forward with it. A sort of confused glow enveloped the objects spread out under us, and unfortunately obscured their outline.

I examined my companion afresh.

He was a man of thirty years, simply clad. The sharpness of his features betrayed an indomitable energy, and he seemed very muscular. Indifferent to the astonishment he created, he remained motionless, trying to distinguish the objects which were vaguely confused below us.

"Miserable mist!" said he after a few moments.

I did not reply.

"You owe me a grudge?" he went on. "Bah! I could not pay for my journey, and it was necessary to take you by surprise."

"Nobody asks you to descend, monsieur!"

"Eh, but do you know, then, that the same thing happened to the Counts of Laurencin and Dampierre, when they ascended at Lyons, on the 15th of January, 1784? A young merchant, named Fontaine, scaled the gallery at the risk of capsizing the machine. He accomplished the journey, and nobody died of it!"

"Once on the ground, we will have an explanation," replied I, piqued at the light tone in which he spoke.

"Bah! Do not let us think of our return."

"Do you think, then, that I shall not hasten to descend?"

"Descend!" said he in surprise. "Descend! Let us begin by first ascending."

And before I could prevent it, two more bags had been thrown from the car, without even having been emptied.

"Monsieur!" cried I in a rage.

"I know your ability," replied the unknown quietly, "and your fine ascents are famous. But if Experience is the sister of Practice, she is also a cousin of Theory, and I have studied the aerial art long. It has got into my head!" he added, falling into a silent reverie.

The balloon having risen some distance farther, now became stationary. The unknown consulted the barometer and said—

"Here we are, at eight hundred yards. Men are like insects. See! I think we should always contemplate them from this height, to judge correctly of their proportions. The Place de la Comédie is transformed into an immense ant-hill. Observe the crowd which is gathered on the quays; and the mountains also get smaller and smaller. We are over the Cathedral. The Maine is only a line, cutting the city in two, and the bridge seems a thread drawn between the two banks of the river."

The atmosphere became somewhat chilly.

"There is nothing I would not do for you, my host," said the unknown. "If you are cold, I will take off my coat and lend it to you."

"Thanks," said I dryly.

"Bah! Necessity makes law. Give me your hand. I am your fellow-countryman; you will learn something in my company; and my conversation will indemnify you for the trouble I have given you."

I sat down, without replying, at the opposite extremity of the car. The young man had taken a voluminous manuscript from his great-coat. It was an essay on ballooning.

"I possess," said he, "the most curious collection of engravings and caricatures extant concerning aerial manias. How people admired and scoffed at the same time at this precious discovery! We are happily no longer in the age in which Montgolfier tried to make artificial clouds by steam,

or a gas having electrical properties, produced by the combustion of moist straw and chopped-up wool."

"Do you wish to depreciate the talent of the inventors?" I asked, for I had resolved to enter into the adventure. "Was it not good to have proved by experience the possibility of rising in the air?"

"Ah, monsieur, who denies the glory of the first aerial navigators? It required immense courage to rise by means of those frail envelopes which only contained heated air. But I ask you, has the aerial science made great progress since Blanchard's ascensions, that is, since nearly a century ago? Look here, monsieur."

The unknown took an engraving from his portfolio.

"Here," said he, "is the first aerial voyage undertaken by Pilâtre de Rozier and the Marquis d'Arlandes, four months after the discovery of balloons. Louis XVI refused to consent to the venture, and two men who were condemned to death were the first to attempt the aerial ascent. Pilâtre de Rozier became indignant at this injustice, and by means of intrigues obtained permission to make the experiment. The car, which renders the management easy, had not then been invented, and a circular gallery was placed around the lower and contracted part of the Montgolfier balloon. The two aeronauts must then remain motionless at each extremity of this gallery, for the moist straw which filled it forbade them all motion. A chafing-dish with fire was suspended below the orifice of the balloon; when the aeronauts wished to rise, they threw straw upon this brazier, at the risk of setting fire to the balloon, and the air, more heated, gave it fresh ascending power. The two bold travellers rose, on the 21st of November, 1783, from the Muette Gardens, which the dauphin had put at their disposal. The balloon went up majestically, passed over the Isle of Swans, crossed the Seine at the Conference Barrier, and drifting between the dome of the Invalides and the Military School, approached the Church of Saint-Sulpice.

Then the aeronauts added to the fire, crossed the Boulevard, and descended beyond the Enfer barrier. As it touched the soil the balloon collapsed, and for a few moments buried Pilâtre de Rozier under its folds."

"Unlucky augury," said I, interested in this story, which affected me nearly.

"An augury of the catastrophe which was later to cost this unfortunate man his life," replied the unknown sadly. "Have you never experienced anything like it?"

"Never."

"Bah! Misfortunes sometimes occur unforeshadowed!" added my companion.

He then remained silent.

Meanwhile we were advancing southward, and Frankfort had already passed from beneath us.

"Perhaps we shall have a storm," said the young man.

"We shall descend before that," I replied.

"Indeed. It is better to ascend. We shall escape it more surely."

And two more bags of sand were hurled into space.

The balloon rose rapidly and stopped at twelve hundred yards. I became colder; and yet the sun's rays, falling upon the surface, expanded the gas within and gave it a greater ascending force.

"Fear nothing," said the unknown. "We have still three thousand five hundred fathoms of breathing air. Besides, do not trouble yourself about what I do."

I would have risen, but a vigorous hand held me to my seat.

"Your name?" I asked.

"My name? What matters it to you?"

"I demand your name!"

"My name is Erostratus or Empedocles, whichever you choose!"

This reply was far from reassuring.

The unknown, besides, talked with such strange cool-

ness that I anxiously asked myself whom I had to deal with.

"Monsieur," he continued, "nothing original has been imagined since the physicist Charles. Four months after the discovery of balloons, this able man had invented the valve, which permits the gas to escape when the balloon is too full, or when you wish to descend; the car, which aids the management of the machine; the netting, which holds the envelope of the balloon, and divides the weight over its whole surface; the ballast, which enables you to ascend, and to choose the place of your landing; the india-rubber coating, which renders the tissue impermeable; the barometer, which shows the height attained. Lastly, Charles used hydrogen, which, fourteen times lighter than air, permits you to penetrate to the highest atmospheric regions, and does not expose you to the dangers of a combustion in the air. On the 1st of December, 1783, three hundred thousand spectators were crowded around the Tuileries. Charles rose and the soldiers presented arms to him. He travelled nine leagues in the air, conducting his balloon with an ability not surpassed by modern aeronauts. The King awarded him a pension of two thousand livres; for then they encouraged new inventions."

The unknown man seemed to be under the influence of considerable agitation.

"Monsieur," he resumed, "I have studied this, and I am convinced that the first aeronauts guided their balloons. Without speaking of Blanchard, whose assertions may be received with doubt, Guyton-Morreaux, by the aid of oars and rudder, made his machine answer to the helm and take the direction he determined on. More recently, M. Julien, a watchmaker, made some convincing experiments at the Hippodrome, in Paris; for by a special mechanism, his aerial apparatus, oblong in form, went visibly against the wind. It occurred to M. Petin to place four hydrogen balloons together; and, by means of sails hung horizontally

and partly folded, he hopes to be able to disturb the equilibrium, and, thus inclining the apparatus, to convey it in an oblique direction. They speak also of forces to overcome the resistance of currents—for instance, the screw; but the screw, working on a movable centre, will give no result. I, monsieur, have discovered the only means of guiding balloons; and no academy has come to my aid, no city has filled up subscriptions for me, no Government has thought fit to listen to me! It is infamous!"

The unknown gesticulated fiercely, and the car underwent violent oscillations. I had much trouble in calming him.

Meanwhile the balloon had entered a more rapid current, and we advanced south at fifteen hundred yards above the earth.

"See, there is Darmstadt," said my companion, leaning over the car. "Do you perceive the château? Not very distinctly, eh? What would you have? The heat of the storm makes the outline of objects waver, and you must have a skilled eye to recognize localities."

"Are you sure it is Darmstadt?" I asked.

"I am sure. We are now six leagues from Frankfort."

"Then we must descend."

"Descend! You would not go down on the steeples," said the unknown, with a chuckle.

"No, but in the suburbs of the city."

"Well, let us avoid the steeples."

So speaking, my companion seized some bags of ballast. I hastened to prevent him; but he overthrew me with one hand, and the unballasted balloon ascended to two thousand yards.

"Rest easy," said he, "and do not forget that Biot, Gay-Lussac, Bixio and Barral ascended to still greater heights to make their scientific experiments."

"Monsieur, we must descend," I resumed, trying to persuade him by gentleness. "The storm is gathering around us. It would be more prudent."

"Bah! We will mount higher than the storm, and then we shall no longer fear it!" cried my companion. "What is nobler than to overlook the clouds which oppress the earth? Is it not an honour thus to navigate on aerial billows?" The greatest men have travelled as we are doing. The Marchioness and Countess of Montalembert, the Countess of Podenas, Mademoiselle la Garde, the Marquis de Montalembert, rose from the Faubourg Saint-Antoine for these unknown regions, and the Duke de Chartres exhibited much skill and presence of mind in his ascent on the 15th of July, 1784. At Lyons the Counts of Laurencin and Dampierre; at Nantes, M. de Luyores; at Bordeaux, D'Arbelet des Granges; in Italy, the Chevalier d'Andreassi; in our own time, the Duke of Brunswick,—have all left the traces of their glory in the air. To equal these great personages, we must penetrate still higher than they into the celestial depths! To approach the infinite is to comprehend it."

The rarefaction of the air was fast expanding the hydrogen in the balloon, and I saw its lower part, purposely left empty, swell out, so that it was absolutely necessary to open the valve; but my companion did not seem to intend that I should manage the balloon as I wished. I then resolved to pull the valve-cord secretly, as he was excited by talking; for I feared to guess with whom I had to deal. It would have been too horrible. It was nearly a quarter before one. We had been gone forty minutes from Frankfort; heavy clouds were coming against the wind from the south, and seemed about to burst upon us.

"Have you lost all hope of succeeding in your project?" I asked, with anxious interest.

"All hope!" exclaimed the unknown in a low voice. "Wounded by slights and caricatures, these asses' kicks have finished me! It is the eternal punishment reserved for innovators. Look at these caricatures of all periods, of which my portfolio is full."

While my companion was fumbling with his papers, I

had seized the valve-cord without his perceiving it. I feared, however, that he might hear the hissing noise, like a water-course, which the gas makes in escaping.

"How many jokes were made about the Abbé Miolan!" said he. "He was to go up with Ganninet and Bredin. During the filling their balloon caught fire and the ignorant populace tore it to pieces! Then the caricature of 'curious animals' appeared, giving each of them a punning nickname."

I pulled the valve-cord, and the barometer began to ascend. It was time. Some far-off rumblings were heard in the south.

"Here is another engraving," resumed the unknown, not suspecting what I was doing. "It is an immense balloon carrying a ship, strong castles, houses, and so on. The caricaturists did not suspect that their follies would one day become truths. It is complete, this large vessel. On the left is its helm, with the pilot's box; at the prow are pleasure-houses, an immense organ, and a cannon to call the attention of the inhabitants of the earth or the moon; above the poop there are the observatory and the balloon long-boat; in the equatorial circle, the army barrack; on the left, the funnel; then the upper galleries for promenading, sails, pinions; below the cafés and general storehouse. Above this pompous announcement: 'Invented for the happiness of the human race, this globe will depart at once for the ports of the Levant, and on its return the programme of its voyages to the two poles and the extreme west will be announced. No one need furnish himself with anything; everything is foreseen, and all will prosper. There will be a uniform price for all places of distinction, but it will be the same for the most distant countries of our hemisphere—that is to say, a thousand louis for one of any of the said journeys. And it must be confessed that the sum is very moderate, when the speed, comfort and arrangements which will be enjoyed on the balloon are considered—

arrangements which are not to be found on land, while on the balloon each passenger may consult his own habits and tastes. This is so true that in the same place some will be dancing, others standing; some will be enjoying delicacies; others fasting. Whoever desires the society of wits may satisfy himself; whoever is stupid may find stupid people to keep him company. Thus pleasure will be the soul of the aerial company.' All this provoked laughter, but before long, if I am not cut off, they will see it realized."

We were visibly descending. He did not perceive it!

"This kind of 'game at balloons,'" he resumed, spreading out before me some of the engravings of his valuable collection, "this game contains the entire history of aerostatic art. It is used by elevated minds, and is played with dice and counters, with whatever stakes you like, to be paid or received according to where the player arrives."

"Why," said I, "you seem to have studied the science of aerostation profoundly."

"Yes, monsieur, yes! From Phaeton, Icarus, Architas, I have searched for, examined, learnt everything. I could render immense services to the world in this art if God granted me life. But that will not be."

"Why?"

"Because my name is Empedocles or Erostratus."

Meanwhile the balloon was happily approaching the earth; but when one is falling, the danger is as great at a hundred feet as at five thousand.

"Do you recall the battle of Fleurus?" resumed my companion, whose face became more and more animated. "It was at that battle that Contello, by order of the Government, organized a company of balloonists. At the siege of Maubeuge, General Jourdan desired so much service from this new method of observation that Contello ascended twice a day with the General himself. The communications between the aeronaut and his agents who held the balloon were made by means of small white, red and

yellow flags. Often the gun and cannon shot were directed upon the balloon when he ascended, but without result. When General Jourdan was preparing to invest Charleroi, Contello went into the vicinity, ascended from the plain of Jumet, and continued his observations for seven or eight hours with General Morlot, and this no doubt aided in giving us the victory of Fleurus. General Jourdan publicly acknowledged the help which the aeronautical observations had afforded him. Well, despite the services rendered on that occasion and during the Belgium campaign, the year which had seen the beginning of the military career of balloons saw its end. The school of Meudon, founded by the Government, was closed by Buonaparte on his return from Egypt. And now, what can you expect from the new-born infant? as Franklin said. The infant was born alive; it should not be stifled."

The unknown bowed his head in his hands and reflected for some moments; then raising his head, he said—

"Despite my prohibition, monsieur, you have opened the valve."

I dropped the cord.

"Happily," he resumed, "we have still three hundred pounds of ballast."

"What is your purpose?" said I.

"Have you ever crossed the seas?" he asked.

I turned pale.

"It is unfortunate," he went on, "that we are being driven towards the Adriatic. That is only a stream, but higher up we may find other currents."

And without taking any notice of me, he threw over several bags of sand; then in a menacing voice he said—

"I let you open the valve because the expansion of the gas threatened to burst the balloon; but do not do it again!"

Then he went on as follows:—

"You remember the voyage of Blanchard and Jefferies

from Dover to Calais? It was magnificent. On the 7th of January, 1785, there being a north-west wind, their balloon was inflated with gas on the Dover coast. A mistake of equilibrium, just as they were ascending, forced them to throw out their ballast so that they might not go down again, and they only kept thirty pounds. It was too little; for, as the wind did not freshen, they only advanced very slowly towards the French coast. Besides, the permeability of the tissue served to reduce the inflation little by little, and in half an hour the aeronauts perceived that they were descending.

"'What shall we do?' said Jefferies.

"'We are only one-quarter of the way over,' replied Blanchard, 'and very low down. On rising, we shall perhaps meet more favourable winds.'

"'Let us throw out the rest of the sand.'

"The balloon acquired some ascending force, but it soon began to descend again. Towards the middle of the transit the aeronauts threw over their books and tools. A quarter of an hour after Blanchard said to Jefferies—

"'The barometer?'

"'It is going up! We are lost, and yet there is the French coast.'

"A loud noise was heard.

"'Has the balloon burst?' asked Jefferies.

"'No. The loss of the gas has reduced the inflation of the lower part of the balloon. But we are still descending. We are lost! Out with everything useless!'

"Provisions, oars, rudder were thrown into the sea. The aeronauts were only one hundred yards high.

"'We are going up again,' said the doctor.

"'No. It is the spurt caused by the diminution of the weight, and not a ship in sight, not a bark on the horizon. To the sea with our clothing!'

"The unfortunates stripped themselves, but the balloon continued to descend.

" 'Blanchard,' said Jefferies, 'you should have made this voyage alone; you consented to take me; I will sacrifice myself! I am going to throw myself into the water, and the balloon relieved of my weight, will mount again.'

" 'No, no! It is frightful!'

" The balloon became less and less inflated, and as it doubled up its concavity pressed the gas against the sides, and hastened its downward course.

" 'Adieu, my friend,' said the doctor. 'God preserve you!'

" He was about to throw himself over, when Blanchard held him back.

" 'There is one more chance,' said he. 'We can cut the cords which hold the car and cling to the net! Perhaps the balloon will rise. Let us hold ourselves ready. But the barometer is going down. The wind is freshening. We are saved!'

" The aeronauts perceived Calais. Their joy was delirious. A few moments more and they had fallen in the forest of Guînes. I do not doubt," added the unknown, " that under similar circumstances you would have followed Doctor Jefferies' example."

The clouds rolled in glittering masses beneath us. The balloon threw large shadows on this heap of clouds, and was surrounded as by an aureola. The thunder rumbled below the car. All this was terrifying.

" Let us descend," I cried.

" Descend, when the sun is up there, waiting for us. Out with more bags!"

And more than fifty pounds of ballast were cast over.

At a height of three thousand five hundred yards we remained stationary.

The unknown talked unceasingly. I was in a state of complete prostration, while he seemed to be in his element.

" With a good wind, we shall go far," he cried. " In the Antilles there are currents of air which have a speed of a hundred leagues an hour. When Napoleon was crowned,

Garnerin sent up a balloon with coloured lamps at eleven o'clock at night. The wind was blowing north-north-west. The next morning, at daybreak, the inhabitants of Rome greeted its passage over the dome of St. Peter's. We shall go farther and higher."

I scarcely heard him. Everything whirled round me. An opening appeared in the clouds.

"See that city," said the unknown. "It is Spires!"

I leaned over the car and perceived a small blackish mass. It was Spires. The Rhine, which is so large, seemed an unrolled ribbon. The sky was a deep blue over our heads. The birds had long abandoned us, for in that rarefied air they could not have flown. We were alone in space, and I in presence of this unknown.

"It is useless for you to know whither I am leading you," he said, as he threw the compass among the clouds. "Ah! a fall is a grand thing! You know that but few victims of ballooning are to be reckoned, from Pilâtre de Rozier to Lieutenant Gale, and the accidents have always been the result of imprudence. Pilâtre de Rozier set out with Romain of Boulogne on the 13th of June, 1785. To his gas balloon he had affixed a Montgolfier apparatus of hot air, so as to dispense, no doubt, with the necessity of losing gas or throwing out ballast. It was putting a torch under a powder-barrel. When they had ascended four hundred yards and were taken by opposing winds, they were driven over the open sea. Pilâtre, in order to descend, essayed to open the valve, but the valve-cord became entangled in the balloon, and tore it so badly that it became empty in an instant. It fell upon the Montgolfier apparatus, overturned it, and dragged down the unfortunates, who were soon shattered to pieces! It is frightful, is it not?"

I could only reply, "For pity's sake let us descend!"

The clouds gathered around us on every side, and dreadful detonations, which reverberated in the cavity of the balloon, took place beneath us.

"You provoke me," cried the unknown, "and you shall no longer know whether we are rising or falling."

The barometer went the way of the compass, accompanied by several more bags of sand. We must have been eight thousand yards high. Some icicles had already attached themselves to the sides of the car, and a kind of fine snow seemed to penetrate to my very bones. Meanwhile a frightful tempest was raging under us, but we were above it.

"Do not be afraid," said the unknown. "It is only the imprudent who are lost. Olivari, who perished at Orleans, rose in a paper 'Montgolfier'; his car, suspended below the chafing-dish and ballasted with combustible materials, caught fire; Olivari fell, and was killed! Mosment rose, at Lille, on a light tray; an oscillation disturbed his equilibrium; Mosment fell, and was killed! Bittorf, at Mannheim, saw his balloon catch fire in the air; and he, too, fell, and was killed! Harris rose in a badly constructed balloon, the valve of which was too large, and would not shut; Harris fell, and was killed! Sadler, deprived of ballast by his long sojourn in the air, was dragged over the town of Boston and dashed against the chimneys; Sadler fell, and was killed! Cokling descended with a convex parachute which he pretended to have perfected. Cokling fell, and was killed! Well, I love them, these victims of their own imprudence, and I shall die as they did. Higher! still higher!"

All the phantoms of this necrology passed before my eyes. The rarefaction of the air and the sun's rays added to the expansion of the gas, and the balloon continued to mount. I tried mechanically to open the valve, but the unknown cut the cord several feet above my head. I was lost!

"Did you see Madame Blanchard fall?" said he. "I saw her; yes, I! I was at Tivoli on the 6th of July, 1819. Madame Blanchard rose in a small-sized balloon, to avoid the expense of filling, and she was forced to entirely inflate it. The gas leaked out below, and left a regular train of

hydrogen in its path. She carried with her a sort of pyrotechnic aureola, suspended below her car by a wire, which she was to set off in the air. This she had done many times before. On this day she also carried up a small parachute ballasted by a firework contrivance, that would go off in a shower of silver. She was to start this contrivance after having lighted it with a port-fire made on purpose. She set out; the night was gloomy. At the moment of lighting her fireworks, she was so imprudent as to pass the taper under the column of hydrogen which was leaking from the balloon. My eyes were fixed upon her. Suddenly an unexpected gleam lit up the darkness. I thought she was preparing a surprise. The light flashed out, suddenly disappeared and reappeared, and gave the summit of the balloon the shape of an immense jet of ignited gas. The sinister glow shed itself over the Boulevard and the whole Montmartre quarter. Then I saw the unhappy woman rise, try twice to close the appendage of the balloon, so as to put out the fire, then sit down in her car and try to guide her descent; for she did not fall. The combustion of the gas lasted for several minutes. The balloon, becoming gradually less, continued to descend, but it was not a fall. The wind blew from the north-west and drove it towards Paris. There were then some large gardens just by the house No. 16, Rue de Provence. Madame Blanchard essayed to fall there without danger; but the balloon and the car struck on the roof of the house with a light shock. 'Save me!' cried the wretched woman. I got into the street at this moment. The car slid along the roof, and encountered an iron clamp. At this concussion, Madame Blanchard was thrown out of her car and precipitated upon the pavement. She was killed!"

These stories froze me with horror. The unknown was standing with bare head, dishevelled hair, haggard eyes!

There was no longer any illusion possible. I at last recognized the horrible truth. I was in the presence of a madman.

He threw out the rest of the ballast, and we must have now reached a height of at least nine thousand yards. Blood spurted from nose and mouth!

"Who are nobler than the martyrs of science?" cried the lunatic. "They are canonized by posterity."

But I no longer heard him. He looked about him, and bending down to my ear, muttered—

"And have you forgotten Zambecarri's catastrophe? Listen. On the 7th of October, 1804, the clouds seemed to lift a little. On the preceding days the wind and rain had not ceased; but the announced ascension of Zambecarri could not be postponed. His enemies were already bantering him. It was necessary to ascend to save the science and himself from becoming a public jest. It was at Boulogne. No one helped him to inflate his balloon.

"He rose at midnight, accompanied by Andreoli and Grossetti. The balloon mounted slowly, for it had been perforated by the rain, and the gas was leaking out. The three intrepid aeronauts could only observe the state of the barometer by aid of a dark lantern. Zambecarri had eaten nothing for twenty-four hours. Grossetti was also fasting.

"'My friends,' said Zambecarri, 'I am overcome by cold, and exhausted. I am dying.'

"He fell inanimate in the gallery. It was the same with Grossetti. Andreoli alone remained conscious. After long efforts he succeeded in reviving Zambecarri.

"'What news? Whither are we going? How is the wind? What time is it?'

"'It is two o'clock.'

"'Where is the compass?'

"'Upset.'

"'Great God! The lantern has gone out!'

"'It cannot burn in this rarefied air,' said Zambecarri.

"The moon had not risen, and the atmosphere was plunged in murky darkness.

"'I am cold, Andreoli. What shall I do?'

"They slowly descended through a layer of whitish clouds.

"'Sh!' said Andreoli. 'Do you hear?'

"'What?' asked Zambecarri.

"'A strange noise.'

"'You are mistaken.'

"'No.'

"Consider these travellers in the middle of the night listening to that unaccountable noise! Are they going to knock against a tower? Are they about to be precipitated on the roofs?

"'Do you hear? One would say it was the noise of the sea.'

"'Impossible!'

"'It is the groaning of the waves!'

"'It is true.'

"'Light! light!'

"After five fruitless attempts Andreoli succeeded in obtaining light. It was three o'clock.

"The noise of violent waves was heard. They were almost touching the surface of the sea!

"'We are lost!' cried Zambecarri, seizing a large bag of sand.

"'Help!' cried Andreoli.

"The car touched the water, and the waves came up to their breasts.

"'Throw out the instruments, clothes, money!'

"The aeronauts completely stripped themselves. The balloon, relieved, rose with frightful rapidity. Zambecarri was taken with vomiting. Grossetti bled profusely. The unfortunate men could not speak, so short was their breathing. They were broken with cold, and they were soon crusted over with ice. The moon looked as red as blood.

"After traversing the high regions for a half-hour, the balloon again fell into the sea. It was four in the morning. They were half submerged in the water, and the balloon dragged them along, as if under sail for several hours.

"At daybreak they found themselves opposite Pesaro, four miles from the coast. They were about to reach it, when a gale blew them back into the open sea. They were lost! The frightened boats fled at their approach. Happily a more intelligent boatman accosted them, hoisted them on board, and they landed at Ferrara.

"A frightful journey, was it not? But Zambecarri was a brave and energetic man. Scarcely recovered from his sufferings, he resumed his ascensions. During one of them he struck against a tree; his spirit lamp was broken on his clothes; he was enveloped in fire, his balloon began to catch the flames, and he came down half consumed.

"At last, on the 21st of September, 1812, he made another ascension at Boulogne. The balloon clung to a tree, and his lamp again set it on fire. Zambecarri fell, and was killed! And in presence of these facts we would still hesitate? No. The higher we go, the more glorious will be our death."

The balloon being entirely relieved of ballast and of all it contained, we were carried to an enormous height. It vibrated in the atmosphere. The least noise resounded in the vaults of heaven. Our globe, the only object which caught my eye in immensity, seemed ready to be annihilated, and above us the depths of the starry skies were lost in thick darkness.

I saw my companion rise up before me.

"The hour is come!" said he. "We must die. We are rejected of men. They despise us. Let us crush them!"

"Mercy!" I cried.

"Let us cut these cords. Let this car be abandoned in space. The attractive force will change its direction, and we shall approach the sun."

Despair galvanized me. I threw myself upon the madman; we struggled together, and a terrible conflict took place. But I was thrown down, and while he held me under his knee, the madman was cutting the cords of the car.

"One!" he cried.

"My God!"

"Two! Three!"

I made a superhuman effort, rose up and violently repulsed the madman.

"Four!"

The car fell, but I instinctively clung to the cords and hoisted myself into the meshes of the netting.

The madman disappeared into space.

The balloon was raised to an immeasurable height. A horrible cracking was heard. The gas, too much dilated, had burst the balloon. I shut my eyes——

Some instants after, a damp warmth revived me. I was in the midst of clouds on fire. The balloon turned over with dizzy velocity. Taken by the wind, it made a hundred leagues an hour in a horizontal course, the lightning flashing around it.

Meanwhile my fall was not a very rapid one. When I opened my eyes, I saw the country. I was two miles from the sea, and the tempest was driving me violently towards it, when an abrupt shock forced me to loosen my hold. My hands opened, a cord slipped swiftly between my fingers, and I found myself on the solid earth.

It was the cord of the anchor, which sweeping along the surface of the ground was caught in a crevice; and my balloon, unballasted for the last time, careered off to lose itself beyond the sea.

When I came to myself, I was in bed in a peasant's cottage at Harderwick, a village of La Gueldre, fifteen leagues from Amsterdam, on the shores of the Zuyder-Zee.

A miracle had saved my life, but my voyage had been a series of imprudences, committed by a lunatic, and I had not been able to prevent them.

May this terrible narrative, though instructing those who read it, not discourage the explorers of the air.

ALPHONSE DAUDET

(1840–1897)

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(I)

THE CHILD SPY

His name was Stenne, little Stenne. He was a child of Paris, sickly and pale, who might have been ten years old, or perhaps fifteen; with those little insects one never knows. His mother was dead; his father, an old soldier of marines, had the care of a square in the quarter of the Temple. The babies, the nurses, the old ladies in deck chairs, the poor mothers, all the little trotting Paris that comes to shelter from the carriages among these pavement-bordered flower-beds knew Father Stenne, and worshipped him. They knew that under the rough moustache, the terror of dogs and bench crawlers, was hidden a good and tender smile, almost maternal, and that, to see this smile, they had only to say to the good man: "How is your little boy?" So fond was Father Stenne of his little boy! He was so happy in the evening, after school-time, when the little one came for him, and the two of them went together round the paths, stopping at each seat to salute the regular visitors, and to reply to their greetings.

With the siege, unfortunately, everything was changed. Father Stenne's square was shut, petroleum was stored there, and the poor man, compelled to incessant watchfulness, passed his life in the deserted and uprooted shrubberies, alone, and not smoking, no longer having his boy until the evening, very late in the house. His moustache was a thing to see when he spoke of the Prussians. Little Stenne for his part did not find too much to complain of in the new life.

A siege! It is so amusing for the young monkeys. No more school! No more preparation! Holidays all the time and the street like a fair-ground.

The child stayed out of doors till evening, running about. He accompanied the battalions of the quarter when they went to the rampart, choosing, for preference, those that had a good band; and on this point little Stenne was very strong. He would tell you with conviction that that of the 98th was not worth much, but that they had an excellent one in the 55th. At other times he watched the reserves at drill, and then there were the queues. . . .

His basket on his arm, he joined those long files that formed in the dusk of the gas-less winter mornings, at the railings of the butcher's and baker's. There, with feet in the gutter, one made acquaintances, talked politics, and, as the son of M. Stenne, everybody asked his opinion. But most amusing of all were the galoche [1] matches, that famous cork game that the Breton reserves had made fashionable during the siege. When little Stenne was neither on the ramparts nor at the bakeries, you were sure of finding him at the galoche match, in the Place du Château d'Eau. He did not play, of course; that needs too much money. He contented himself by watching the players with his eyes! One in particular, a big fellow in a blue coat, who risked nothing but five-franc pieces, excited his admiration. When he ran, one could hear crowns clinking in the depths of his coat.

One day, as he picked up a coin that had rolled almost under little Stenne's feet, the big fellow said in a low voice: "That makes you squint, eh? Well, if you like, I will tell you where to find them."

When the game was over, he took him into a corner of the square and proposed that he should come with him to sell newspapers to the Prussians, who paid thirty francs for the

[1] A game played by knocking over a cork with money on it, under certain conditions, usually with a ball or metal disc.

journey. At first Stenne refused, very indignant; and the shock kept him three days from going back to the game. Three terrible days, He no longer ate or slept. At night he saw piles of corks standing at the foot of his bed, and five-franc pieces that rolled shining on the floor. The temptation was too strong. The fourth day he went back to the Château d'Eau, saw the big fellow again, and allowed himself to be persuaded. . . .

They set out on a snowy morning, sacks on their shoulders, and newspapers hidden under their blouses. It was scarcely day when they reached the Pâte de Flandres. The big fellow took Stenne by the hand, and, going up to the sentinel, a brave sedentary with a red nose and an air of benevolence —he said in the whine of poverty:

"Let us pass, good monsieur. . . . Our mother is ill, and papa is dead. My little brother and I are going to see if we can get some potatoes in the fields."

He wept. Stenne, full of shame, bent his head. The sentinel looked at them for a moment, and then glanced along the deserted white road.

"Get along quickly," he said, dismissing them; and then they were on the road to Aubervilliers. How the big fellow laughed.

Confusedly, as in a dream, little Stenne saw factories turned into barracks, deserted barricades decorated with wet rags, tall chimneys that made holes in the mist and climbed into the sky, empty and broken. At long intervals, a sentinel, officers muffled up who were looking into the distance with glasses, and little tents soaked with melted snow before dying fires. The big fellow knew the roads and went across country toward the pickets. However, without being able to escape it, they ran into a body of francs-tireurs. The francs-tireurs with their little hooded cloaks were crouched in the bottom of a ditch full of water, all along the Soissons railway. This time the big fellow might well begin his story over again, they would not let them pass.

Then, while he was bewailing himself, from the house of the level-crossing keeper, there came out on the trench an old sergeant, white and wrinkled, who was like Father Stenne:

"Now then, youngsters, no more crying!" he said to the children. "You will be allowed to go after your potatoes; but first come in and warm yourselves a little. That little kid looks frozen!"

Alas! it was not with cold that little Stenne was trembling, it was with fear, it was with shame. . . . In the guard-house there were some soldiers squatting round a meagre fire, a true widow's fire before whose flame they were getting the frost out of their biscuits on the point of their bayonets. They pressed together to make room for the children. They gave them a little coffee to sip. While they were drinking, an officer came to the door, called the sergeant, whispered to him, and went off very fast.

"My boys!" said the sergeant, coming in radiant. . . . "There will be sport to-night. . . . They have got hold of the Prussian password. . . . I think that this time we are going to recapture that blessed Bourget." [1]

There was an explosion of laughs and cheers. There was dancing and singing and polishing up of bayonets; and profiting by the uproar the children disappeared.

On the other side of the trench there was only the plain, and beyond it a long white wall pierced with loopholes. They made towards this wall, stopping at every step to make a pretence of collecting potatoes.

"Let's go back. . . . Let's not go," little Stenne kept saying all the time.

The other shrugged his shoulders and kept on his way. Suddenly they heard the click of a rifle being cocked.

"Lie down," said the big fellow, flinging himself on the ground.

[1] A little place close in Paris, where on the 28th and 30th of October and 21st of December, 1870, there were bloody battles against the Prussians.

Once down, he whistled. Another whistle answered over the snow. They went on on all-fours. Before the wall, on the level of the ground, appeared a pair of yellow moustaches under a dirty flat cap. The big fellow jumped down into the trench beside the Prussian.

"This is my brother," he said, pointing to his companion.

He was so little, this Stenne, that the Prussian laughed to see him, and was obliged to take him in his arms to hoist him up to the breach.

On the other side of the wall there were big embankments of earth, trees lying along the ground, black holes in the snow, and in every hole the same filthy flat cap, the same yellow moustache that laughed at seeing the children.

In a corner there was a gardener's house, casemated with tree-trunks. The ground-floor was full of soldiers playing cards, and making soup on a big clear fire. The cabbage and lard smelt good; how different from the bivouac of the francs-tireurs! Upstairs, the officers! One could hear them playing the piano, and uncorking champagne bottles. When the Parisians went in they were welcomed with a hurrah of joy. They handed over their newspapers; drinks were poured out for them and they were made to talk. All these officers looked proud and wicked; but the big fellow amused them with his gutter spirits, his lout's slang. They laughed, repeated his words after him, and rolled with delight in the Paris mud that he had brought them.

Little Stenne would have liked to talk too, and show that he was not a fool; but something hindered him. In front of him, a Prussian older and more serious than the rest sat apart, and read, or rather pretended to read, since his eyes never left little Stenne. There was tenderness and reproach in his eyes, as if the man had in his own country a child of the same age as Stenne, and as if he were saying to himself: "I would die than see my son follow such a trade. . ."

From this moment on, Stenne felt as if a hand rested on his heart and prevented it from beating.

To escape from this pain he began to drink. Soon everything turned about him. He vaguely heard, in the midst of guffaws, his comrade laughing at the National Guards, and their manner of drill, imitating a call to arms in the Marais, a night alarm on the ramparts. And then the big fellow lowered his voice, the officers leant forward and their faces became grave. The wretch was in the act of warning them of the attack of the francs-tireurs. . . .

This time little Stenne jumped up furious and sobered: "Not that, you great . . . I will not."

But the fellow only laughed and went on. Before he had finished, all the officers were on their feet. One of them showed the children to the door.

"Out of the camp!" he said to them. And they began to talk, among themselves, very quickly, in German. The big fellow went out, proud as a doge, clinking his money. Stenne followed him, hanging his head; and when he passed by the Prussian whose look had troubled him so much, he heard a sad voice that said, "Not bretty that . . . not bretty." The tears came to his eyes.

Once on the plain, the children began to run, and went quickly back again. Their sack was full of potatoes that the Prussians had given them; and so they passed without hindrance the francs-tireurs' trench. There they were getting ready for the night's attack. Troops were silently coming up and massing themselves behind the walls. The old sergeant was there, busied in placing his men, with an air of happiness. When the children passed, he recognized them and gave them a kind smile. . . .

Oh! how that smile hurt little Stenne! For a moment he thought of crying out: "Don't go over there . . . we have betrayed you." But his comrade had told him: "If you speak we shall be shot," and fear prevented him.

At Corneuve they went into a deserted house to divide the money. Truth obliges me to admit that the division was honestly made, and that at hearing the good crown-

pieces clink under his blouse, at thinking of the cork games that they promised him, little Stenne no longer thought his crime so hideous.

But, when he was alone, the wretched child! When, inside gates, the big fellow had left him, then his pocket began to grow very heavy, and the hand that gripped his heart gripped it harder than ever. Paris no longer seemed the same to him. The passers-by looked at him severely as if they knew whence he had come. The word "spy" was heard by him in the noise of the wheels, in the beating of the drums practising along the canal. At last he got home, and, quite happy to see that his father had not yet come in, he climbed quickly to their room to hide under his pillow the crowns that weighed on him so heavily.

Never had Father Stenne been so kind, so joyous as in coming in that evening. News had just come in from the provinces: things were going better in the country. As he ate, the old soldier looked at his gun hanging on the wall, and said to the child with his jolly laugh: "Hein, boy, how you would go for the Prussians if you were big!"

Towards eight o'clock there was the noise of cannon.

"It is Aubervilliers. There is fighting at Bourget," said the good man, who knew all his forts.

Little Stenne grew pale, and, on pretext of being very tired, he went to bed, but he did not sleep. The cannon thundered continually. He imagined the francs-tireurs going by night to surprise the Prussians and falling themselves into an ambuscade. He remembered the sergeant who had smiled at him, and saw him stretched out on the snow over there, and how many others with him! . . . The price of all this blood was hidden there, under his pillow, and it was he, the son of M. Stenne, of a soldier. . . . Tears choked him. He heard his father walking in the next room, and opening the window. Below in the square sounded the call to arms, and a battalion of reserves was mustering

before setting out. Decidedly it was a real battle. The wretched child could not restrain a sob.

"What is the matter then?" said Father Stenne, coming in.

The child kept up no longer, but leapt from his bed, and came and threw himself at his father's feet. At the movement he made the crowns rolled to the ground.

"What is that? You have stolen?" said the old man, trembling.

Then, all in a breath, little Stenne told that he had gone among the Prussians, and what he had done there. As he talked he felt his heart freer, it eased him to accuse himself. . . . Father Stenne listened with a terrible expression. When it was done, he hid his head in his hands and wept.

"Father, father . . ." the child wanted to say.

The old man repulsed him without answering, and gathered up the money.

"This is all?" he asked.

Little Stenne made a sign that it was all. The old man took down his gun and his cartridge pouch, and putting the money in his pocket: "Very well," he said, "I am going to give it back to them." And without adding a word, without even turning his head, he went down to join the reserves who were going off that night. He was never seen again.

(II)

THE POPE'S MULE

(Translated by George Burnham Ives)

Of all the clever sayings, proverbs, or saws with which our Provence peasants embellish their discourse, I know of none more picturesque or more peculiar than this. Within a radius of fifteen leagues of my mill, when anybody mentions

a spiteful, vindictive man, he will say: "Look out for that man! he is like the Pope's mule, that keeps her kick for seven years."

I tried for a long time to find out the source of that proverb, what that Papal mule might be, and that kick kept for seven years. No one here was able to give me any information on that subject, not even Francet Mamaï, my fife-player, who, however, has the whole legendary history of Provence at his finger-ends. Francet agrees with me that there is probably some old tradition of Provence behind it; but he has never heard it mentioned except in the proverb.

"You won't find that anywhere except in the Grasshoppers' Library," said the old fifer, with a laugh.

I thought the suggestion a good one, and as the Grasshoppers' Library is right at my door, I shut myself up there for a week.

It is a wonderful library, splendidly stocked, open to poets day and night, the attendants being little librarians with cymbals, who play for you all the time. I passed some delightful days there, and after a week of investigation—on my back—I ended by discovering what I wanted to know, that is to say, the story of my mule and of that famous kick stored up for seven years. The tale is a pretty one, although slightly ingenuous, and I am going to try to tell it to you as I read it yesterday morning in a manuscript of the colour of the weather, which had a pleasant smell of dry lavender, with long gossamer-threads for book-marks.

He who never saw Avignon in the time of the Popes has seen nothing. Never was there such a city for gaiety, life, animation, and a succession of fêtes. There were, from morning till night, processions, pilgrimages, streets strewn with flowers and carpeted with magnificent tapestries, cardinals arriving by the Rhône, with banners flying; gaily bedecked galleys, the soldiers of the Pope singing in Latin on the squares, and the bowls of mendicant friars;

and then, from roof to cellar of the houses that crowded humming about the great Papal palace like bees about their hive, there was the tick-tack of the lace-makers' looms, the rapid movement of the shuttles weaving gold thread for the vestments, the little hammers of the carvers of burettes, the keyboards being tuned at the lute-makers', the songs of the sempstresses; and, overhead, the clang of the bells, and always a tambourine or two jingling down by the bridge. For with us, when the common people are pleased, they must dance and dance; and as the streets in the city in those days were too narrow for the farandole, the fifes and the tambourines stationed themselves on Avignon bridge, in the cool breezes from the Rhône; and there the people danced and danced, day and night. Ah! the happy days! the happy city! Halberds that did not wound, state prisons where they put wine to cool. No famine; no wars. That is how the Popes of the Comtat governed the people; that is why the people regretted them so bitterly.

There was one especially, a good old fellow, whom they called Boniface. Ah! how many tears were shed in Avignon when he died! He was such a good-natured, affable prince! He laughed so heartily from the back of his mule! And when you passed him—though you were simply a poor little digger of madder, or the provost of the city—he would give you his blessing so courteously! He was a genuine Pope of Yvetot, but of a Provençal Yvetot, with a something shrewd in his laughter, a sprig of marjoram in his biretta, and never a sign of a Jeanneton. The only Jeanneton that the old man had ever been known to have was his vineyard, a tiny vineyard which he had planted himself, three leagues from Avignon, among the myrtles of Château Neuf.

Every Sunday, after vespers, the excellent man went to pay court to it; and when he was there, seated in the warm sun, with his mule by his side and his cardinals lying

at the foot of the stumps all about, then he would order a bottle of native wine opened,—that fine, ruby-coloured wine which was called afterwards the Château Neuf of the Popes,—and he would drink it in little sips, looking at his vineyard with a tender expression. Then, when the bottle was empty and the day drew to a close, he would return merrily to the city, followed by all his chapter; and when he rode over Avignon bridge, through the drums and farandoles, his mule, stirred by the music, would fall into a little skipping amble, while he himself marked the time of the dance with his cap, which scandalized his cardinals terribly, but caused the people to say: "Ah! the kind prince! ah! the dear old Pope!"

Next to his vineyard at Château Neuf, the thing that the Pope loved best on earth was his mule. The good man fairly doted on the beast. Every night, before going to bed, he would go to see if his stable was securely fastened, if anything was lacking in the crib; and he never rose from the table until a huge bowl of wine *à la Française*, with plenty of sugar and spices, had been prepared under his own eye, which he carried to the mule himself, despite the comments of his cardinals. It should be said, too, that the beast was worth the trouble. It was a fine black mule, dappled with red, sure-footed, with a glossy coat, a broad, full rump; and she carried proudly her slender little head, all bedecked with plumes, and ribbons, and silver bells and streamers; and as gentle as an angel withal, with a mild eye and two long ears always in motion, which gave her a most amiable aspect. All Avignon respected her, and when she passed through the streets there was no attention which the people did not pay her; for they all knew that that was the best way to be in favour at court, and that, with her innocent look, the Pope's mule had led more than one to wealth; witness Tistet Védène and his wonderful adventures.

This Tistet Védène was in truth an impudent rascal, whom his father, Guy Védène, the gold-carver, had been obliged to turn out of his house, because he refused to do any work and led the apprentices astray. For six months he was seen dragging his jacket through all the gutters of Avignon, but principally in the neighbourhood of the Papal palace; for the rogue had had for a long while a scheme of his own about the Pope's mule, and you will see what a mischievous scheme it was.

One day, when his Holiness all alone was riding by the ramparts on his steed, behold my Tistet approaches him, and says, clasping his hands with an air of admiration:

"Ah! *mon Dieu!* what a fine mule you have, Holy Father! Just let me look at her. Ah! what a lovely mule, my Pope! the Emperor of Germany has not her like."

And he patted her and spoke softly to her, as to a maiden:

"Come, my jewel, my treasure, my pearl."

And the excellent Pope, deeply moved, said to himself:

"What a nice little fellow! How nice he is with my mule!"

And what do you suppose happened the next day? Tistet Védène exchanged his old yellow jacket for a fine lace alb, a violet silk hood, and shoes with buckles; and he entered the household of the Pope, to which only sons of nobles and nephews of cardinals had ever been admitted. That is what intrigue leads to! But Tistet Védène did not stop there. Once in the Pope's service, the rascal continued the game that had succeeded so well. Insolent with everybody else, he reserved his attention and care for the mule alone; and he was always to be seen in the courtyard of the palace, with a handful of oats or a bunch of clover, whose purple clusters he shook as he glanced at the Holy Father's balcony, as if he would say: "Look! for whom is this?" The result was that the excellent Pope finally, feeling that he was growing old, left it to him to look after

the stable and to carry the mule her bowl of wine *à la Française ;* which did not make the cardinals laugh.

Nor the mule either—it did not make her laugh. Now, when the time for her wine arrived, she always saw five or six little clerks of the household enter her stable and hastily bury themselves in the straw with their hoods and their lace; then, after a moment, a delicious odour of caramel and spices filled the stable, and Tistet Védène appeared, carefully carrying the bowl of wine *à la Française*. Then the poor beast's martyrdom began.

That perfumed wine which she loved so dearly, which kept her warm, which gave her wings, they had the fiendish cruelty to bring to her manger, to let her inhale it, and then, when her nostrils were full of it, off it went! the beautiful rose-coloured liquor disappeared down the throats of those young rogues. And if they had only contented themselves with stealing her wine! but all those little clerks were like devils when they had been drinking. One pulled her ears, another her tail; Quiquet mounted her back, Béluguet tried his cap on her head, and not one of the scamps reflected that with a sudden kick the excellent beast could have sent them all into the polar star, or even farther. But no! not for nothing is one the Pope's mule, the mule of benedictions and indulgences. Let the boys do what they would, she did not lose her temper, and she bore a grudge to Tistet Védène alone. But he—when she felt him behind her, her hoofs fairly itched, and in good sooth there was reason for it. That ne'er-do-well of a Tistet played her such cruel tricks! He conceived such fiendish ideas after drinking!

Would you believe that one day he took it into his head to make her go up with him into the belfry, way up to the highest point of the palace! And this that I am telling you is not a fable—two hundred thousand Provençals saw it. Just imagine the terror of that wretched beast, when,

after twisting blindly about for an hour on a winding staircase, and climbing I know not how many stairs, she suddenly found herself on a platform dazzling with light; and a thousand feet below her, a whole fantastic Avignon, the stalls in the market no larger than walnuts, the Pope's soldiers in front of their barracks like red ants, and yonder, over a silver thread, a little microscopic bridge where the people danced and danced. Ah! the poor creature! what a panic! All the windows in the palace shook with the bray that she uttered.

"What's the matter? What are they doing to her?" cried the good Pope, rushing out upon the balcony.

"Ah! Holy Father, this is what's the matter! Your mule—*mon Dieu!* what will become of us!—your mule has gone up into the belfry."

"All alone?"

"Yes, Holy Father, all alone. See! look up there. Don't you see the ends of her ears hanging over, like two swallows!"

"Merciful Heaven!" exclaimed the poor Pope, raising his eyes. "Why, she must have gone mad! Why, she will kill herself! Will you come down here, you wretched creature?"

Pécaïre! She would have asked nothing better than to come down; but how? As to the staircase, that was not to be thought of; it is possible to go up such things; but in going down there is a chance to break one's legs a hundred times. And the poor mule was in despair; as she wandered about the platform with her great eyes filled with vertigo, she thought of Tistet Védène.

"Ah! You villain, if I escape, what a kick to-morrow morning!"

That idea of a kick restored a little of her courage; save for that, she could not have held out. At last they succeeded in taking her down; but it was a difficult task. They had to lower her in a litter, with ropes and a jack-

screw. And you can imagine what a humiliation it was for the Pope's mule to be suspended at that height, swinging about with her hoofs in the air, like a butterfly at the end of a string. And all Avignon looking at her!

The wretched beast did not sleep that night. It seemed to her all the time that she was walking about on that infernal platform, with the city laughing below her; then she thought of that infamous Tistet Védène, and of the dainty kick that she proposed to give him in the morning. Ah! my friends, what a kick! they would see the smoke at Pampérigouste.

Now, while this pleasant reception was in store for him at the stable, what do you suppose Tistet Védène was doing? He was going down the Rhône, singing, on one of the Pope's galleys, on his way to the court of Naples, with a party of young nobles whom the city sent every year to Queen Joanna, for training in diplomacy and in refined manners. Tistet was not of noble birth; but the Pope desired to reward him for the care he had bestowed upon his mule, and above all for the activity he had displayed during the day of rescue.

Imagine the mule's disappointment the next morning!

"Ah! the villain! he suspected something!" she thought, as she shook her bells savagely; "but never mind, you scoundrel! you shall have it when you come back, that kick of yours; I will keep it for you!"

And she did keep it for him.

After Tistet's departure, the mule resumed her quiet mode of life and her former habits. No more Quiquet or Béluguet in her stable. The blissful days of wine *à la Française* had returned, and with them good humour, the long siestas, and the little dancing step when she crossed Avignon bridge. Since her misfortune, however, she was always treated rather coldly in the city. People whispered together as she passed; the old folks shook their heads, and the children laughed as they pointed to the belfry. Even

the worthy Pope himself had not his former confidence in his friend, and when he allowed himself to take a little nap on her back, on Sundays, when he returned from his vineyard, he always had this thought: "Suppose I should wake up on the platform up there!"

The mule saw that and she was unhappy over it, although she said nothing; but when the name of Tistet Védène was mentioned in her presence her long ears quivered, and with a short laugh she would sharpen the iron of her little shoes on the pavement.

Seven years passed thus; and then, at the end of those seven years, Tistet Védène returned from the court of Naples. His time there was not at an end; but he had learned that the Pope's chief mustard-bearer had died suddenly at Avignon, and as the office seemed to him a good one, he returned in great haste to apply for it.

When that schemer of a Védène entered the great hall of the palace, the Holy Father had difficulty in recognizing him, he had grown so tall and so stout. It should be said also that the Pope had grown old too, and that he could not see well without spectacles.

Tistet was not frightened.

"What? don't you recognize me, Holy Father? It is Tistet Védène."

"Védène?"

"Why yes, you know, the one who used to carry the French wine to your mule."

"Oh, yes! I remember. A good little fellow, that Tistet Védène! And what does he want of us now?"

"Oh! a mere nothing, Holy Father. I came to ask you—by the way—have you still your mule? And is she well? Good!—I came to ask you for the place of the chief mustard-bearer, who has just died."

"You, chief mustard-bearer! why, you are too young. How old are you?"

"Twenty years and two months, illustrious pontiff; just

five years older than your mule. Ah! blessed palm of God! the excellent beast! If you only knew how I loved that mule! how I sighed for her in Italy!—Won't you let me see her?"

"Yes, my child, you shall see her," said the kind-hearted Pope, deeply touched. "And as you are so fond of the excellent beast, I propose that you shall live near her. From this day, I attach you to my person as chief mustard-bearer. My cardinals will make an outcry, but so much the worse! I am used to it. Come to us to-morrow, when vespers is done, and we will deliver the symbols of your office, in the presence of our chapter, and then—I will take you to see the mule, and you shall come to the vineyard with us both. Ha! ha!—Now go!"

If Tistet Védène was pleased when he left the great hall, I need not tell you how impatiently he awaited the ceremony of the morrow. Meanwhile, there was someone in the palace still happier than he and even more impatient; that was the mule. From the hour of Védène's return until vespers of the following day the bloodthirsty creature did not cease stuffing herself with oats, and kicking at the wall with her hind feet. She, too, was preparing for the ceremony.

On the morrow, then, when vespers was at an end, Tistet Védène entered the courtyard of the Papal palace. All the high clergy were there, the cardinals in their red robes, the advocate of the devil in black velvet, the convent abbés with their little mitres, the churchwardens of the Saint-Agrico, the violet hoods of the household, the lower clergy too, the Pope's soldiers in full uniform, the three brotherhoods of penitents, the hermits from Mount Ventoux with their fierce eyes, and the little clerk who walks behind them carrying the bell, the Flagellants naked to the waist, the red-faced sacristans in gowns like judges—all, yes, all, even to those who hand the holy water and he who lights and he who extinguishes the candles; not one was missing.

Ah! it was a grand installation! Bells, fireworks, sunlight, music, and, as always, those mad tambourine players leading the dance yonder on Avignon bridge.

When Védène appeared in the midst of the assemblage, his presence and his handsome face aroused a murmur of admiration. He was a magnificent Provençal, of the blond type, with long hair curled at the ends and a small, unruly beard which resembled the shavings of fine metal from the graving-tool of his father the goldsmith. The report was current that the fingers of Queen Joanna had sometimes toyed with that light beard; and Sire de Védène had in truth the vainglorious air and the distraught expression of men whom queens have loved. That day, to do honour to his nation, he had replaced his Neapolitan clothes by a jacket with a pink border *à la Provençale*, and in his hood floated a long plume of the Camargue ibis.

Immediately upon his entrance, the chief mustard-bearer bowed with a noble air, and walked toward the high daïs, where the Pope awaited him, to deliver the symbols of his office: the spoon of yellow wood and the saffron-coloured coat. The mule was at the foot of the staircase, all saddled and ready to start for the vineyard. When he passed her, Tistet Védène smiled affably and stopped to pat her two or three times in a friendly way on the back, looking out of the corner of his eye to see if the Pope noticed him. The position was excellent. The mule let fly:

"There! take that, you villain! For seven years I have been keeping it for you!"

And she gave him a terrible kick, so terrible that the smoke of it was seen from far Pampérigouste, an eddying cloud of blond smoke in which fluttered an ibis-feather—all that remained of the ill-fated Tistet Védène!

A mule's kick is not ordinarily so disastrous; but she was a Papal mule; and then, think of it! she had kept it for him for seven years. There is no finer example of an ecclesiastical grudge.

ÉMILE EDOUARD CHARLES ANTOINE ZOLA

(1840–1902)

THE ATTACK ON THE MILL

I

It was high holiday at Father Merlier's mill on that pleasant summer afternoon. Three tables had been brought out into the garden and placed end to end in the shadow of the great elm, and now they were awaiting the arrival of the guests. It was known throughout the length and breadth of the land that that day was to witness the betrothal of old Merlier's daughter, Françoise, to Dominique, a young man who was said to be not over-fond of work, but whom never a woman for three leagues of the country around could look at without sparkling eyes, such a well-favoured young fellow was he.

That mill of Father Merlier's was truly a very pleasant spot. It was situated right in the heart of Rocreuse, at the place where the main road makes a sharp bend. The village has but a single street, bordered on either side by a row of low, whitened cottages, but just there where the road curves there are broad stretches of meadow-land, and huge trees, which follow the course of the Morelle, cover the low grounds of the valley with a most delicious shade. All Lorraine has no more charming bit of nature to show. To right and left dense forests, great monarchs of the wood, centuries old, rise from the gentle slopes and fill the horizon with a sea of verdure, while away towards the south extends the plain, of wondrous fertility and checkered almost to infinity with its small enclosures, divided off from one

another by their live hedges. But what makes the crowning glory of Rocreuse is the coolness of this verdurous nook, even in the hottest days of July and August. The Morelle comes down from the woods of Gagny, and it would seem as if it gathered to itself on the way all the delicious freshness of the foliage beneath which it glides for many a league; it brings down with it the murmuring sounds, the glacial, solemn shadows of the forest. And that is not the only source of coolness; there are running waters of all kinds singing among the copses; one cannot take a step without coming on a gushing spring, and as he makes his way along the narrow paths he seems to be treading above subterranean lakes that seek the air and sunshine through the moss above and profit by every smallest crevice, at the roots of trees or among the chinks and crannies of the rocks, to burst forth in fountains of crystalline clearness. So numerous and so loud are the whispering voices of these streams that they silence the song of the bullfinches. It is as if one were in an enchanted park, with cascades falling on every side.

The meadows below are never athirst. The shadows beneath the gigantic chestnut trees are of inky blackness, and along the edges of the fields long rows of poplars stand like walls of rustling foliage. There is a double avenue of huge plane trees ascending across the fields towards the ancient castle of Gagny, now gone to rack and ruin. In this region, where drought is never known, vegetation of all kinds is wonderfully rank; it is like a flower garden down there in the low ground between those two wooded hills, a natural garden, where the lawns are broad meadows and the giant trees represent colossal beds. When the noonday sun pours down his scorching rays the shadows lie blue upon the ground, the glowing vegetation slumbers in the heat, while every now and then a breath of icy coldness passes under the foliage.

Such was the spot where Father Merlier's mill enlivened with its cheerful clack nature run riot. The building itself,

constructed of wood and plaster, looked as if it might be coeval with our planet. Its foundations were in part washed by the Morelle, which here expands into a clear pool. A dam, a few feet in height, afforded sufficient head of water to drive the old wheel, which creaked and groaned as it revolved with the asthmatic wheezing of a faithful servant who has grown old in her place. Whenever Father Merlier was advised to change it, he would shake his head and say that like as not a young wheel would be lazier and not so well acquainted with its duties, and then would set to work and patch up the old one with anything that came to hand, old hogshead-staves, bits of rusty iron, zinc or lead. The old wheel only seemed the gayer for it, with its old profile, all plumed and feathered with tufts of moss and grass, and when the water poured over it in a silvery tide its gaunt black skeleton was decked out with a gorgeous display of pearls and diamonds.

That portion of the mill which was bathed by the Morelle had something of the look of a barbaric arch that had been dropped down there by chance. A good half of the structure was built on piles; the water came in under the floor, and there were deep holes, famous throughout the whole country for the eels and the huge crawfish that were to be caught there. Below the fall the pool was as clear as a mirror, and when it was not clouded by foam from the wheel one could see troops of great fish swimming about in it with the slow, majestic movements of a squadron. There was a broken stairway leading down to the stream, near a stake to which a boat was fastened, and over the wheel was a gallery of wood. Such windows as there were were arranged without any attempt at order. The whole was a quaint conglomeration of nooks and corners, bits of wall, additions made here and there as after-thoughts, beams and roofs, that gave the mill the aspect of an old, dismantled citadel; but ivy and all sorts of creeping plants had grown luxuriantly and kindly covered up such crevices as were too

unsightly, casting a mantle of green over the old dwelling. Young ladies who passed that way used to stop and sketch Father Merlier's mill in their albums.

The side of the house that faced the road was less irregular. A gateway in stone afforded access to the principal court-yard, on the right and left hand of which were sheds and stables. Beside a well stood an immense elm that threw its shade over half the court. At the further end, opposite the gate, stood the house, surmounted by a dovecote, the four windows of its first floor in a symmetrical line. The only vanity that Father Merlier ever allowed himself was to paint this façade every ten years. It had just been freshly whitened at the time of our story, and dazzled the eyes of all the village when the sun lighted it up in the middle of the day.

For twenty years had Father Merlier been mayor of Rocreuse. He was held in great consideration on account of his fortune; he was supposed to be worth something like eighty thousand francs, the result of patient saving. When he married Madeleine Guillard, who brought him the mill as her dowry, his entire capital lay in his two strong arms, but Madeleine had never repented of her choice, so manfully had he conducted their joint affairs. Now his wife was dead, and he was left a widower with his daughter Françoise. Doubtless he might have set himself down to take his rest and suffered the old mill-wheel to sleep among its moss, but he would have found idleness too irksome and the house would have seemed dead to him. He kept on working still for the pleasure of it. In those days Father Merlier was a tall old man, with a long, silent face, on which a laugh was never seen, but beneath which there lay, none the less, a large fund of good-humour. He had been elected mayor on account of his money, and also for the impressive air that he knew how to assume when it devolved on him to marry a couple.

Françoise Merlier had just completed her eighteenth

year. She was small, and for that reason was not accounted one of the beauties of the country. Until she reached the age of fifteen she had been even homely; the good folks of Rocreuse could not see how it was that the daughter of Father and Mother Merlier, such a hale, vigorous couple, had such a hard time of it in getting her growth. When she was fifteen, however, though still remaining delicate, a change came over her and she took on the prettiest little face imaginable. She had black hair, black eyes, and was red as a rose withal; her mouth was always smiling, there were delicious dimples in her cheeks, and a crown of sunshine seemed to be ever resting on her fair, candid forehead. Although small as girls went in that region, she was far from being thin; she might not have been able to raise a sack of wheat to her shoulder, but she became quite plump as she grew older, and gave promise of becoming eventually as well-rounded and appetizing as a partridge. Her father's habits of taciturnity had made her reflective while yet a young girl; if she always had a smile on her lips it was in order to give pleasure to others. Her natural disposition was serious.

As was no more than to be expected, she had every young man in the country-side at her heels as a suitor, more even for her money than for her attractiveness, and she had made a choice at last, a choice that had been the talk and scandal of the entire neighbourhood.

On the other side of the Morelle lived a strapping young fellow who went by the name of Dominique Penquer. He was not to the manner born; ten years previously he had come to Rocreuse from Belgium to receive the inheritance of an uncle who had owned a small property on the very borders of the forest of Gagny, just facing the mill and distant from it only a few musket-shots. His object in coming was to sell the property, so he said, and return to his own home again; but he must have found the land to his liking, for he made no move to go away. He was seen cultivating his

bit of a field and gathering the few vegetables that afforded him an existence. He fished, he hunted; more than once he was near coming in contact with the law through the intervention of the keepers. This independent way of living, of which the peasants could not very clearly see the resources, had in the end given him a bad name. He was vaguely looked upon as nothing better than a poacher. At all events he was lazy, for he was frequently found sleeping in the grass at hours when he should have been at work. Then, too, the hut in which he lived, in the shade of the last trees of the forest, did not seem like the abode of an honest young man; the old women would not have been surprised at any time to hear that he was on friendly terms with the wolves in the ruins of Gagny. Still, the young girls would now and then venture to stand up for him, for he was altogether a splendid specimen of manhood, was this individual of doubtful antecedents, tall and straight as a young poplar, with a milk-white skin and ruddy hair and moustaches that seemed to be of gold when the sun shone on them. Now one fine morning it came to pass that Françoise told Father Merlier that she loved Dominique, and that never, never would she consent to marry any other young man.

It may be imagined what a knockdown blow it was that Father Merlier received that day! As was his wont, he said never a word; his countenance wore its usual reflective look, only the fun that used to bubble up from within no longer shone in his eyes. Françoise, too, was very serious, and for a week father and daughter scarcely spoke to each other. What troubled Father Merlier was to know how that rascal of a poacher had succeeded in bewitching his daughter. Dominique had never shown himself at the mill. The miller played the spy a little, and was rewarded by catching sight of the gallant, on the other side of the Morelle, lying among the grass and pretending to be asleep. Françoise could see him from her chamber window. The thing was clear enough; they had been making sheep's

eyes at each other over the old mill-wheel, and so had fallen in love.

A week slipped by; Françoise became more and more serious. Father Merlier still continued to say nothing. Then, one evening, of his own accord, he brought Dominique to the house, without a word. Françoise was just setting the table. She made no demonstration of surprise; all she did was to add another plate, but her laugh had come back to her, and the little dimples appeared again upon her cheeks. Father Merlier had gone that morning to look for Dominique at his hut on the edge of the forest, and there the two men had had a conference, with closed doors and windows, that lasted three hours. No one ever knew what they said to each other; the only thing certain is that when Father Merlier left the hut he already treated Dominique as a son. Doubtless the old man had discovered that he whom he had gone to visit was a worthy young fellow, even though he did lie in the grass to gain the love of young girls.

All Rocreuse was up in arms. The women gathered at their doors and could not find words strong enough to characterize Father Merlier's folly in thus receiving a ne'er-do-well into his family. He let them talk. Perhaps he thought of his own marriage. Neither had he possessed a penny to his name at the time he married Madeleine and her mill, and yet that had not prevented him from being a good husband to her. Moreover, Dominique put an end to their tittle-tattle by setting to work in such strenuous fashion that all the countryside was amazed. It so happened just then that the boy of the mill drew an unlucky number and had to go for a soldier, and Dominique would not hear of their engaging another. He lifted sacks, drove the cart, wrestled with the old wheel when it took an obstinate fit and refused to turn, and all so pluckily and cheerfully that people came from far and near merely for the pleasure of seeing him. Father Merlier laughed his silent laugh. He was highly elated that he had read the youngster

aright. There is nothing like love to hearten up young men.

In the midst of all that laborious toil Françoise and Dominique fairly worshipped each other. They had not much to say, but their tender smiles conveyed a world of meaning. Father Merlier had not said a word thus far on the subject of their marriage, and they had both respected his silence, waiting until the old man should see fit to give expression to his will. At last, one day toward the middle of July, he had had three tables laid in the courtyard, in the shade of the big elm, and had invited his friends of Rocreuse to come that afternoon and drink a glass of wine with him. When the courtyard was filled with people, and everyone there had a full glass in his hand, Father Merlier raised his own high above his head and said:

"I have the pleasure of announcing to you that Françoise and this lad will be married in a month from now, on St. Louis' fête-day."

Then there was a universal touching of glasses, attended by a tremendous uproar; everyone was laughing. But Father Melier, raising his voice above the din, again spoke:

"Dominique, kiss your wife that is to be. It is no more than customary."

And they kissed, very red in the face, both of them, while the company laughed louder still. It was a regular fête; they emptied a small cask. Then, when only the intimate friends of the house remained, conversation went on in a calmer strain. Night had fallen, a starlit night, and very clear. Dominique and Françoise sat on a bench, side by side, and said nothing. An old peasant spoke of the war that the Emperor had declared against Prussia. All the lads of the village were already gone off to the army. Troops had passed through the place only the night before. There were going to be hard knocks.

"Bah!" said Father Merlier, with the selfishness of a man who is quite happy, "Dominique is a foreigner; he won't

have to go—and if the Prussians come this way, he will be here to defend his wife."

The idea of the Prussians coming there seemed to the company an exceedingly good joke. The army would give them one good conscientious thrashing, and the affair would be quickly ended.

"I have seen them before, I have seen them before," the old peasant repeated, in a low voice.

There was silence for a little, then they all touched glasses once again. Françoise and Dominique had heard nothing; they had managed to clasp hands behind the bench in such a way as not to be seen by the others, and this condition of affairs seemed so beatific to them that they sat there mute, their gaze lost in the darkness of the night.

What a magnificent, balmy night! The village lay slumbering on either side of the white road as peacefully as a little child. The deep silence was undisturbed save by the occasional crow of a cock in some distant barnyard acting on a mistaken impression that dawn was at hand. Perfumed breaths of air, like long-drawn sighs, came down from the great woods that lay around and above, sweeping softly over the roofs, as if caressing them. The meadows, with their black intensity of shadow, took on a dim, mysterious majesty of their own, while all the springs, all the brooks and water courses that gurgled in the darkness, might have been taken for the cool, rhythmical breathing of the sleeping country. Every now and then the old dozing mill-wheel seemed to be dreaming like a watch-dog that barks uneasily in his slumber; it creaked, it talked to itself, rocked by the fall of the Morelle, whose current gave forth the deep, sustained music of an organ pipe. Never was there a more charming or happier nook, never did a deeper peace come down to cover it.

II

One month later, to a day, on the eve of the fête of St. Louis, Rocreuse was in a state of alarm and dismay. The Prussians had beaten the Emperor, and were advancing on the village by forced marches. For a week past people passing along the road had brought tidings of the enemy: "They are at Lormières, they are at Nouvelles;" and by dint of hearing so many stories of the rapidity of their advance, Rocreuse woke up every morning in the full expectation of seeing them swarming down out of Gagny wood. They did not come, however, and that only served to make the affright the greater. They would certainly fall upon the village in the night-time, and put every soul to the sword.

There had been an alarm the night before, a little before daybreak. The inhabitants had been aroused by a great noise of men tramping upon the road. The women were already throwing themselves upon their knees and making the sign of the cross, when someone, to whom it happily occurred to peep through a half-opened window, caught sight of red trousers. It was a French detachment. The captain had forthwith asked for the mayor, and, after a long conversation with Father Merlier, had remained at the mill.

The sun shone bright and clear that morning, giving promise of a warm day. There was a golden light floating over the woodland, while in the low grounds white mists were rising from the meadows. The pretty village, so neat and trim, awoke in the cool dawning, and the country, with its streams and its fountains, was as gracious as a freshly-plucked bouquet. But the beauty of the day brought gladness to the face of no one; the villagers had watched the captain, and seen him circle round and round the old mill, examine the adjacent houses, then pass to the other bank of the Morelle, and from thence scan the country with a field-glass; Father Merlier, who accompanied him, appeared

to be giving explanations. After that the captain had posted some of his men behind walls, behind trees, or in hollows. The main body of the detachment had encamped in the courtyard of the mill. So there was going to be a fight, then? And when Father Merlier returned they questioned him. He spoke no word, but slowly and sorrowfully nodded his head. Yes, there was going to be a fight.

Françoise and Dominique were there in the courtyard, watching him. He finally took his pipe from his lips, and gave utterance to these few words:

"Ah! my poor children, I shall not be able to marry you to-day!"

Dominique, with lips tight set and an angry frown upon his forehead, raised himself on tiptoe from time to time and stood with eyes bent on Gagny wood, as if he would have been glad to see the Prussians appear and end the suspense they were in. Françoise, whose face was grave and very pale, was constantly passing back and forth, supplying the needs of the soldiers. They were preparing their soup in a corner of the courtyard, joking and chaffing one another while awaiting their meal.

The captain appeared to be highly pleased. He had visited the chambers and the great hall of the mill that looked out on the stream. Now, seated beside the well, he was conversing with Father Merlier.

"You have a regular fortress here," he was saying. "We shall have no trouble in holding it until evening. The bandits are late; they ought to be here by this time."

The miller looked very grave. He saw his beloved mill going up in flame and smoke, but uttered no word of remonstrance or complaint, considering that it would be useless. He only opened his mouth to say:

"You ought to take steps to hide the boat; there is a hole behind the wheel fitted to hold it. Perhaps you may find it of use to you."

The captain gave an order to one of his men. This

captain was a tall, fine-looking man of about forty, with an agreeable expression of countenance. The sight of Dominique and Françoise seemed to afford him much pleasure; he watched them as if he had forgotten all about the approaching conflict. He followed Françoise with his eyes as she moved about the courtyard, and his manner showed clearly enough that he thought her charming. Then, turning to Dominique:

"You are not with the army, I see, my boy?" he abruptly asked.

"I am a foreigner," the young man replied.

The captain did not seem particularly pleased with the answer; he winked his eyes and smiled. Françoise was doubtless a more agreeable companion than a musket would have been. Dominique, noticing his smile, made haste to add:

"I am a foreigner, but I can lodge a rifle bullet in an apple at five hundred yards. See, there's my rifle behind you."

"You may find use for it," the captain dryly answered.

Françoise had drawn near; she was trembling a little, and Dominique, regardless of the bystanders, took and held firmly clasped in his own the two hands that she held forth to him, as if committing herself to his protection. The captain smiled again, but said nothing more. He remained seated, his sword between his legs, his eyes fixed on space, apparently lost in dreamy reverie.

It was ten o'clock. The heat was already oppressive. A deep silence prevailed. The soldiers had sat down in the shade of the sheds in the courtyard and begun to eat their soup. Not a sound came from the village, where the inhabitants had all barricaded their houses, doors and windows. A dog, abandoned by his master, howled mournfully upon the road. From the woods and the nearby meadows, that lay fainting in the heat, came a long-drawn, whispering, soughing sound, produced by the union

of what wandering breaths of air there were. A cuckoo called. Then the silence became deeper still.

And all at once, upon that lazy, sleepy air, a shot rang out. The captain rose quickly to his feet, the soldiers left their half-emptied plates. In a few seconds all were at their posts; the mill was occupied from top to bottom. And yet the captain, who had gone out through the gate, saw nothing; to right and left the road stretched away, desolate and blindingly white in the fierce sunshine. A second report was heard, and still nothing to be seen, not even so much as a shadow; but just as he was turning to re-enter he chanced to look over towards Gagny and there beheld a little puff of smoke floating away on the tranquil air, like thistle-down. The deep peace of the forest was apparently unbroken.

"The rascals have occupied the wood," the officer murmured. "They know we are here."

Then the firing went on, and became more and more continuous between the French soldiers posted about the mill and the Prussians concealed among the trees. The bullets whistled over the Morelle without doing any mischief on either side. The firing was irregular; every bush seemed to have its marksman, and nothing was to be seen save those bluish smoke wreaths that hung for a moment on the wind before they vanished. It lasted thus for nearly two hours. The officer hummed a tune with a careless air. Françoise and Dominique, who had remained in the court-yard, raised themselves to look out over a low wall. They were more particularly interested in a little soldier who had his post on the bank of the Morelle, behind the hull of an old boat; he would lie face downward on the ground, watch his chance, deliver his fire, then slip back into a ditch a few steps in his rear to reload, and his movements were so comical, he displayed such cunning and activity, that it was difficult for anyone watching him to refrain from smiling. He must have caught sight of a Prussian, for he rose quickly

and brought his piece to the shoulder, but before he could discharge it he uttered a loud cry, whirled completely around in his tracks and fell backward into the ditch, where for an instant his legs moved convulsively, just as the claws of a fowl do when it is beheaded. The little soldier had received a bullet directly through his heart. It was the first casualty of the day. Françoise instinctively seized Dominique's hand, and held it tight in a convulsive grasp.

"Come away from there," said the captain. "The bullets reach us here."

As if to confirm his words a slight, sharp sound was heard up in the old men, and the end of a branch came to the ground, turning over and over as it fell, but the two young people never stirred, riveted to the spot as they were by the interest of the spectacle. On the edge of the wood a Prussian had suddenly emerged from behind a tree, as an actor comes upon the stage from the wings, beating the air with his arms and falling over upon his back. And beyond that there was no movement; the two dead men appeared to be sleeping in the bright sunshine; there was not a soul to be seen in the fields on which the heat lay heavy. Even the sharp rattle of the musketry had ceased. Only the Morelle kept on whispering to itself with its low, musical murmur.

Father Melier looked at the captain with an astonished air, as if to inquire whether that were the end of it.

"Here comes their attack," the officer murmured. "Look out for yourself! Don't stand there!"

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when a terrible discharge of musketry ensued. The great elm was riddled, its leaves came eddying down as thick as snowflakes. Fortunately the Prussians had aimed too high. Dominique dragged, almost carried, Françoise from the spot, while Father Merlier followed them, shouting:

"Get into the small cellar, the walls are thicker there."

But they paid no attention to him; they made their way to the main hall, where ten or a dozen soldiers were silently

waiting, watching events outside through the chinks of the closed shutters. The captain was left alone in the courtyard, where he sheltered himself behind the low wall, while the furious fire was maintained uninterruptedly. The soldiers whom he had posted ouside only yielded their ground inch by inch; they came crawling in, however, one after another, as the enemy dislodged them from their positions. Their instructions were to gain all the time they could, taking care not to show themselves, in order that the Prussians might remain in ignorance of the force they had opposed to them. Another hour passed, and as a sergeant came in, reporting that there were now only two or three men left outside, the officer took his watch from his pocket, murmuring:

"Half-past two. Come, we must hold out for four hours yet."

He caused the great gate of the courtyard to be tightly secured, and everything was made ready for an energetic defence. The Prussians were on the other side of the Morelle, consequently there was no reason to fear an assault at the moment. There was a bridge indeed, a mile and a quarter away, but they were probably unaware of its existence, and it was hardly to be supposed that they would attempt to cross the stream by fording. The officer, therefore, simply caused the road to be watched; the attack, when it came, was to be looked for from the direction of the fields.

The firing had ceased again. The mill appeared to lie there in the sunlight, void of all life. Not a shutter was open, not a sound came from within. Gradually, however, the Prussians began to show themselves at the edge of Gagny wood. Heads were protruded here and there; they seemed to be mustering up their courage. Several of the soldiers within the mill brought up their pieces to an aim, but the captain shouted:

"No, no; not yet; wait. Let them come nearer."

They displayed a great deal of prudence in their advance, looking at the mill with a distrustful air; they seemed hardly

to know what to make of the old structure, so lifeless and gloomy, with its curtain of ivy. Still they kept on advancing. When there were fifty of them or so in the open, directly opposite, the officer uttered one word:

"Now!"

A crashing, tearing discharge burst from the position, succeeded by an irregular, dropping fire. Françoise, trembling violently, involuntarily raised her hands to her ears. Dominique, from his position behind the soldiers, peered out upon the field, and when the smoke drifted away a little, counted three Prussians extended on their backs in the middle of the meadow. The others had sought shelter among the willows and the poplars. And then commenced the siege.

For more than an hour the mill was riddled with bullets; they beat and rattled on its old walls like hail. The noise they made was plainly audible as they struck the stonework, were flattened, and fell back into the water; they buried themselves in the woodwork with a dull thud. Occasionally a creaking sound would announce that the wheel had been hit. Within the building the soldiers husbanded their ammunition, firing only when they could see something to aim at. The captain kept consulting his watch every few minutes, and as a ball split one of the shutters in halves and then lodged in the ceiling:

"Four o'clock," he murmured. "We shall never be able to hold the position."

The old mill, in truth, was gradually going to pieces beneath that terrific fire. A shutter that had been perforated again and again, until it looked like a piece of lace, fell off its hinges into the water, and had to be replaced by a mattress. Every moment, almost, Father Melier exposed himself to the fire in order to take account of the damage sustained by his poor wheel, every wound of which was like a bullet in his own heart. Its period of usefulness was ended this time for certain; he would never be able to patch it up again.

Dominique had besought Françoise to retire to a place of safety, but she was determined to remain with him; she had taken a seat behind a great oaken clothes-press, which afforded her protection. A ball struck the press, however, the sides of which gave out a dull hollow sound, whereupon Dominique stationed himself in front of Françoise. He had as yet taken no part in the firing, although he had his rifle in his hand; the soldiers occupied the whole breadth of the windows, so that he could not get near them. At every discharge the floor trembled.

"Look out! look out!" the captain suddenly shouted.

He had just descried a dark mass emerging from the wood. As soon as they gained the open they set up a telling platoon fire. It struck the mill like a tornado. Another shutter parted company, and the bullets came whistling in through the yawning aperture. Two soldiers rolled upon the floor; one lay where he fell and never moved a limb; his comrades pushed him up against the wall because he was in their way. The other writhed and twisted, beseeching someone to end his agony, but no one had ears for the poor wretch; the bullets were still pouring in, and everyone was looking out for himself and searching for a loophole whence he might answer the enemy's fire. A third soldier was wounded; that one said not a word, but with staring, haggard eyes sank down beneath a table. Françoise, horror-stricken by the dreadful spectacle of the dead and dying men, mechanically pushed away her chair and seated herself on the floor, against the wall; it seemed to her that she would be smaller there and less exposed. In the meantime men had gone and secured all the mattresses in the house; the opening of the window was partially closed again. The hall was filled with débris of every description, broken weapons, dislocated furniture.

"Five o'clock," said the captain. "Stand fast, boys. They are going to make an attempt to pass the stream."

Just then Françoise gave a shriek. A bullet had struck

the floor, and, rebounding, grazed her forehead on the ricochet. A few drops of blood appeared. Dominique looked at her, then went to the window and fired his first shot, and from that time kept on firing uninterruptedly. He kept on loading and discharging his piece mechanically, paying no attention to what was passing at his side, only pausing from time to time to cast a look at Françoise. He did not fire hurriedly or at random, moreover, but took deliberate aim. As the captain had predicted, the Prussians were skirting the belt of poplars and attempting the passage of the Morelle, but each time that one of them showed himself he fell with one of Dominique's bullets in his brain. The captain, who was watching the performance, was amazed; he complimented the young man, telling him that he would like to have many more marksmen of his skill. Dominique did not hear a word he said. A ball struck him in the shoulder, another raised a contusion on his arm. And still he kept on firing.

There were two more deaths. The mattresses were torn to shreds and no longer availed to stop the windows. The last volley that was poured in seemed as if it would carry away the mill bodily, so fierce it was. The position was no longer tenable. Still, the officer kept repeating:

"Stand fast. Another half-hour yet."

He was counting the minutes, one by one, now. He had promised his commanders that he would hold the enemy there until nightfall, and he would not budge a hair's-breadth before the moment that he had fixed on for his withdrawal. He maintained his pleasant air of good humour, smiling at Françoise by way of reassuring her. He had picked up the musket of one of the dead soldiers and was firing away with the rest.

There were but four soldiers left in the room. The Prussians were showing themselves *en masse* on the other side of the Morelle, and it was evident that they might now pass the stream at any moment. A few moments more elapsed;

the captain was as determined as ever, and would not give the order to retreat, when a sergeant came running into the room, saying:

"They are on the road; they are going to take us in the rear."

The Prussians must have discovered the bridge. The captain drew out his watch again.

"Five minutes more," he said. "They won't be here within five minutes."

Then exactly at six o'clock he at last withdrew his men through a little postern that opened on a narrow lane, whence they threw themselves into the ditch, and in that way reached the forest of Sauval. The captain took leave of Father Merlier with much politeness, apologizing profusely for the trouble he had caused. He even added:

"Try to keep them occupied for a while. We shall return."

While this was occurring Dominique had remained alone in the hall. He was still firing away, hearing nothing, conscious of nothing; his sole thought was to defend Françoise. The soldiers were all gone, and he had not the remotest idea of the fact; he aimed and brought down his man at every shot. All at once there was a great tumult. The Prussians had entered the courtyard from the rear. He fired his last shot, and they fell upon him with his weapon still smoking in his hand.

It required four men to hold him; the rest of them swarmed about him, vociferating like madmen in their horrible dialect. Françoise rushed forward to intercede with her prayers. They were on the point of killing him on the spot, but an officer came in and made them turn the prisoner over to him. After exchanging a few words in German with his men he turned to Dominique and said to him, in very good French:

"You will be shot in two hours from now."

III

It was the standing regulation, laid down by the German staff, that every Frenchman, not belonging to the regular army, taken with arms in his hands should be shot. Even the *compagnies franches* were not recognized as belligerents. It was the intention of the Germans, in making such terrible examples of the peasants who attempted to defend their firesides, to prevent a rising *en masse*, which they greatly dreaded.

The officer, a tall, square man of about fifty years old, subjected Dominique to a brief examination. Although he spoke French fluently, he was unmistakably Prussian in the stiffness of his manner.

"You are a native of this country?"

"No, I am a Belgian."

"Why did you take up arms? These are matters with which you have no concern."

Dominique made no reply. At this moment the officer caught sight of Françoise where she stood listening, very pale; her slight wound had marked her white forehead with a streak of red. He looked from one to the other of the young people and appeared to understand the situation: he merely added:

"You do not deny having fired on my men?"

"I fired as long as I was able to do so," Dominique quietly replied.

The admission was scarcely necessary, for he was black with powder, wet with sweat, and the blood from the wound in his shoulder had trickled down and stained his clothing.

"Very well," the officer repeated. "You will be shot two hours hence."

Françoise uttered no cry. She clasped her hands and raised them above her head in a gesture of mute despair. Her action was not lost upon the officer. Two soldiers

had led Dominique away to an adjacent room, where their orders were to guard him and not lose sight of him. The girl had sunk upon a chair; her strength had failed her, her legs refused to support her; she was denied the relief of tears, it seemed as if her emotion was strangling her. The officer continued to examine her attentively, and finally addressed her:

"Is this young man your brother?" he inquired.

She shook her head in negation. He was as rigid and unbending as ever, without the suspicion of a smile on his face. Then, after an interval of silence, he spoke again:

"Has he been living in the neighbourhood long?"

She answered yes, by another motion of the head.

"Then he must be well acquainted with the woods about here?"

This time she made a verbal answer. "Yes, sir," she said, looking at him with some astonishment.

He said nothing more, but turned on his heel, requesting that the mayor of the village should be brought before him. But Françoise had risen from her chair, a faint tinge of colour on her cheeks, believing that she had caught the significance of his questions, and with renewed hope she ran off to look for her father.

As soon as the firing had ceased Father Merlier had hurriedly descended by the wooden gallery to have a look at his wheel. He adored his daughter and had a strong feeling of affection for Dominique, his son-in-law who was to be; but his wheel also occupied a large space in his heart. Now that the two little ones, as he called them, had come safe and sound out of the fray, he thought of his other love, which must have suffered sorely, poor thing, and bending over the great wooden skeleton he was scrutinizing its wounds with a heartbroken air. Five of the buckets were reduced to splinters, the central framework was honeycombed. He was thrusting his fingers into the cavities that the bullets had made to see how deep they were and reflecting

how he was ever to repair all that damage. When Françoise found him he was already plugging up the crevices with moss and such débris as he could lay hands on.

"They are asking for you, father," said she.

And at last she wept as she told him what she had just heard. Father Merlier shook his head. It was not customary to shoot people like that. He would have to look into the matter. And he re-entered the mill with his usual placid, silent air. When the officer made his demand for supplies for his men, he answered that the people of Rocreuse were not accustomed to be ridden roughshod, and that nothing would be obtained from them through violence; he was willing to assume all the responsibility, but only on condition that he was allowed to act independently. The officer at first appeared to take umbrage at this easy way of viewing matters, but finally gave way before the old man's brief and distinct representations. As the latter was leaving the room the other recalled him to ask:

"Those woods there, opposite, what do you call them?"

"The woods of Sauval."

"And how far do they extend?"

The miller looked him straight in the face. "I do not know," he replied.

And he withdrew. An hour later the subvention in money and provisions that the officer had demanded was in the courtyard of the mill. Night was coming on; Françoise followed every movement of the soldiers with an anxious eye. She never once left the vicinity of the room in which Dominique was imprisoned. About seven o'clock she had a harrowing emotion; she saw the officer enter the prisoner's apartment, and for a quarter of an hour heard their voices raised in violent discussion. The officer came to the door for a moment and gave an order in German which she did not understand, but when twelve men came and formed in the courtyard with shouldered muskets, she was seized with a fit of trembling and felt as if she should die. It was all

over, then; the execution was about to take place. The twelve men remained there ten minutes; Dominique's voice kept rising higher and higher in a tone of vehement denial. Finally the officer came out, closing the door behind him with a vicious bang and saying:

"Very well; think it over. I give you until to-morrow morning."

And he ordered the twelve men to break ranks by a motion of his hand. Françoise was stupefied. Father Merlier, who had continued to puff away at his pipe while watching the platoon with a simple, curious air, came and took her by the arm with fatherly gentleness. He led her to her chamber.

"Don't fret," he said to her; "try to get some sleep. To-morrow it will be light and we shall see more clearly."

He locked the door behind him as he left the room. It was a fixed principle with him that women are good for nothing, and that they spoil everything whenever they meddle in important matters. Françoise did not lie down, however; she remained a long time seated on her bed, listening to the various noises in the house. The German soldiers quartered in the courtyard were singing and laughing; they must have kept up their eating and drinking until eleven o'clock, for the riot never ceased for an instant. Heavy footsteps resounded from time to time through the mill itself, doubtless the tramp of the guards as they were relieved. What had most interest for her was the sounds that she could catch in the room that lay directly under her own; several times she threw herself prone upon the floor and applied her ear to the boards. That room was the one in which they had locked up Dominique. He must have been pacing the apartment, for she could hear for a long time his regular, cadenced tread passing from the wall to the window and back again; then there was a deep silence; doubtless he had seated himself. The other sounds ceased too; everything was still. When it seemed to her that the

house was sunk in slumber she raised her window as noiselessly as possible and leaned out.

Without, the night was serene and balmy. The slender crescent of the moon, which was just setting behind Sauval wood, cast a dim radiance over the landscape. The lengthening shadows of the great trees stretched far athwart the fields in bands of blackness, while in such spots as were unobscured the grass appeared of a tender green, soft as velvet. But Françoise did not stop to consider the mysterious charm of night. She was scrutinizing the country and looking to see where the Germans had posted their sentinels. She could clearly distinguish their dark forms outlined along the course of the Morelle. There was only one stationed opposite the mill, on the far bank of the stream, by a willow whose branches dipped in the water. Françoise had an excellent view of him; he was a tall young man, standing quite motionless with his face upturned towards the sky, with the meditative air of a shepherd.

When she had completed her careful inspection of localities she returned and took her former seat upon the bed. She remained there an hour, absorbed in deep thought. Then she listened again; there was not a breath to be heard in the house. She went again to the window and took another look outside, but one of the moon's horns was still hanging above the edge of the forest, and this circumstance doubtless appeared to her unpropitious, for she resumed her waiting. At last the moment seemed to have arrived; the night was now quite dark; she could no longer discern the sentinel opposite her, the landscape lay before her black as a sea of ink. She listened intently for a moment, then formed her resolve. Close beside her window was an iron ladder made of bars set in the wall, which ascended from the mill-wheel to the granary at the top of the building, and had formerly served the miller as a means of inspecting certain portions of the gearing, but a change having been made in the machinery the ladder had long since become lost to sight

beneath the thick ivy that covered all that side of the mill.

Françoise bravely climbed over the balustrade of the little balcony in front of her window, grasped one of the iron bars and found herself suspended in space. She commenced the descent; her skirts were a great hindrance to her. Suddenly a stone became loosened from the wall and fell into the Morelle with a loud splash. She stopped, benumbed with fear, but reflection quickly told her that the waterfall, with its continuous roar, was sufficient to deaden any noise that she could make, and then she descended more boldly, putting aside the ivy with her foot, testing each round of her ladder. When she was on a level with the room that had been converted into a prison for her lover she stopped. An unforeseen difficulty came near depriving her of all her courage: the window of the room beneath was not situated directly under the window of her bedroom; there was a wide space between it and the ladder, and when she extended her hand it only encountered the naked wall.

Would she have to go back the way she came and leave her project unaccomplished? Her arms were growing very tired; the murmuring of the Morelle, far down below, was beginning to make her dizzy. Then she broke off bits of plaster from the wall and threw them against Dominique's window. He did not hear; perhaps he was asleep. Again she crumbled fragments from the wall, until the skin was peeled from her fingers. Her strength was exhausted; she felt that she was about to fall back into the stream when at last Dominique softly raised his sash.

"It is I," she murmured. "Take me quick; I am about to fall." Leaning from the window he grasped her and drew her into the room, where she had a paroxysm of weeping, stifling her sobs in order that she might not be heard. Then, by a supreme effort of the will she overcame her emotion.

"Are you guarded?" she asked in a low voice.

Dominique, not yet recovered from his stupefaction at seeing her there, made answer by simply pointing toward his door. There was a sound of snoring audible on the outside; it was evident that the sentinel had been overpowered by sleep and had thrown himself upon the floor close against the door in such a way that it could not be opened without arousing him.

"You must fly," she continued earnestly. "I came here to bid you fly and say farewell."

But he seemed not to hear her. He kept repeating:

"What, is it you, is it you? Oh, what a fright you gave me! You might have killed yourself." He took her hands, he kissed them again and again. "How I love you, Françoise! You are as courageous as you are good. The only thing I feared was that I might die without seeing you again; but you are here, and now they may shoot me when they will. Let me but have a quarter of an hour with you and I am ready."

He had gradually drawn her to him; her head was resting on his shoulder. The peril that was so near at hand brought them closer to each other, and they forgot everything in that long embrace.

"Ah, Françoise!" Dominique went on in low, caressing tones, "to-day is the fête of St. Louis, our wedding day, that we have been waiting for so long. Nothing has been able to keep us apart, for we are both here, faithful to our appointment, are we not? It is now our wedding morning."

"Yes, yes," she repeated after him, "our wedding morning."

They shuddered as they exchanged a kiss. But suddenly she tore herself from his arms; the terrible reality arose before her eyes.

"You must fly, you must fly," she murmured breathlessly. "There is not a moment to lose." And as he stretched out his arms in the darkness to draw her to him again, she went

on in tender, beseeching tones: "Oh! listen to me, I entreat you. If you die, I shall die. In an hour it will be daylight. Go, go at once; I command you to go."

Then she rapidly explained her plan to him. The iron ladder extending downward to the wheel; once he had got so far he could climb down by means of the buckets and get into the boat, which was hidden in a recess. Then it would be an easy matter for him to reach the other bank of the stream and make his escape.

"But are there no sentinels?" said he.

"Only one, directly opposite here, at the foot of the first willow."

"And if he sees me, if he gives the alarm?"

Françoise shuddered. She placed in his hand a knife that she had brought down with her. They were silent.

"And your father—and you?" Dominique continued. "But no, it is not to be thought of; I must not fly. When I am no longer here those soldiers are capable of murdering you. You do not know them. They offered to spare my life if I would guide them into Sauval forest. When they discover that I have escaped, their fury will be such that they will be ready for every atrocity."

The girl did not stop to argue the question. To all the considerations that he adduced to her one simple answer was: "Fly. For the love of me, fly. If you love me, Dominique, do not linger here a single moment longer."

She promised that she would return to her bedroom; no one should know that she had helped him. She concluded by folding him in her arms and smothering him with kisses, in an extravagant outburst of passion. He was vanquished. He only put one more question to her:

"Will you swear to me that your father knows what you are doing, and that he counsels my flight?"

"It was my father who sent me to you," Françoise unhesitatingly replied.

She told a falsehood. At that moment she had but one

great, overmastering longing, to know that he was in safety, to escape from the horrible thought that the morning's sun was to be the signal for his death. When he should be far away, then calamity and evil might burst upon her head; whatever fate might be in store for her would seem endurable, so that only his life might be spared. Before and above all other considerations, the selfishness of her love demanded that he should be saved.

"It is well," said Dominique; "I will do as you desire."

No further word was spoken. Dominique went to the window to raise it again. But suddenly there was a noise that chilled them with affright. The door was shaken violently; they thought that someone was about to open it; it was evidently a party going the rounds who had heard their voices. They stood by the window, closely locked in each other's arms, awaiting the event with anguish unspeakable. Again there came the rattling at the door, but it did not open. Each of them drew a deep sigh of relief; they saw how it was. The soldier lying across the threshold had turned over in his sleep. Silence was restored indeed, and presently the snoring began again.

Dominique insisted that Françoise should return to her room first of all. He took her in his arms, he bade her a silent farewell, then helped her to grasp the ladder, and himself climbed out on it in turn. He refused to descend a single step, however, until he knew that she was in her chamber. When she was safe in her room she let fall, in a voice scarce louder than a whisper, the words:

"*Au revoir.* I love you!"

She kneeled at the window, resting her elbows on the sill, straining her eyes to follow Dominique. The night was still very dark. She looked for the sentinel, but could see nothing of him; the willow alone was dimly visible, a pale spot upon the surrounding blackness. For a moment she heard the rustling of the ivy as Dominique descended, then the wheel creaked, and there was a faint splash which told that the

young man had found the boat. This was confirmed when, a minute later, she descried the shadowy outline of the skiff on the grey bosom of the Morelle. Then a horrible feeling of dread seemed to clutch her by the throat. Every moment she thought she heard the sentry give the alarm; every faintest sound among the dusky shadows seemed to her overwrought imagination to be the hurrying tread of soldiers, the clash of steel, the click of musket-locks. The seconds slipped by, however, the landscape still preserved its solemn peace. Dominique must have landed safely on the other bank. Françoise no longer had eyes for anything. The silence was oppressive. And she heard the sound of trampling feet, a hoarse cry, the dull thud of a heavy body falling. This was followed by another silence, even deeper than that which had gone before. Then, as if conscious that Death had passed that way, she became very cold in presence of the impenetrable night.

IV

At early daybreak the repose of the mill was disturbed by the clamour of angry voices. Father Merlier had gone and unlocked Françoise's door. She descended to the courtyard, pale and very calm, but when there, could not repress a shudder upon being brought face to face with the body of a Prussian soldier that lay on the ground beside the well, stretched out upon a cloak.

Around the corpse soldiers were shouting and gesticulating angrily. Several of them shook their fists threateningly in the direction of the village. The officer had just sent a summons to Father Merlier to appear before him in his capacity as mayor of the commune.

"Here is one of our men," he said, in a voice that was almost unintelligible from anger, "who was found murdered on the bank of the stream. The murderer must be found, so that we may make a salutary example of him, and I shall expect you to co-operate with us in finding him."

"Whatever you desire," the miller replied, with his customary impassiveness. "Only it will be no easy matter."

The officer stooped down and drew aside the skirt of the cloak which concealed the dead man's face, disclosing as he did so a frightful wound. The sentinel had been struck in the throat and the weapon had not been withdrawn from the wound. It was a common kitchen-knife, with a black handle.

"Look at that knife," the officer said to Father Merlier. "Perhaps it will assist us in our investigation."

The old man had started violently, but recovered himself at once; not a muscle of his face moved as he replied:

"Everyone about here has knives like that. Like enough your man was tired of fighting and did the business himself. Such things have happened before now."

"Be silent!" the officer shouted in a fury. "I don't know what it is that keeps me from setting fire to the four corners of your village."

His anger fortunately kept him from noticing the great change that had come over Françoise's countenance. Her feelings had compelled her to sit down upon the stone bench beside the well. Do what she would she could not remove her eyes from the body that lay stretched upon the ground, almost at her feet. He had been a tall, handsome young man in life, very like Dominique in appearance, with blue eyes and yellow hair. The resemblance went to her heart. She thought that perhaps the dead man had left behind him in his German home some sweetheart who would weep for his loss. And she recognized her knife in the dead man's throat. She had killed him.

The officer, meantime, was talking of visiting Rocreuse with some terrible punishment, when two or three soldiers came running in. The guard had just that moment ascertained the fact of Dominique's escape. The agitation caused by the tidings was extreme. The officer went to inspect the locality, looked out through the still open window,

saw at once how the event had happened, and returned in a state of exasperation.

Father Merlier appeared greatly vexed by Dominique's flight. "The idiot!" he murmured; "he has upset everything."

Françoise heard him, and was in an agony of suffering. Her father, moreover, had no suspicion of her complicity. He shook his head, saying to her in an undertone:

"We are in a nice box now!"

"It was that scoundrel! it was that scoundrel!" cried the officer. "He has got away to the woods; but he must be found, or the village shall stand the consequences." And addressing himself to the miller: "Come, you must know where he is hiding?"

Father Merlier laughed in his silent way, and pointed to the wide stretch of wooded hills.

"How can you expect to find a man in that wilderness?" he asked.

"Oh! there are plenty of hiding places that you are acquainted with. I am going to give you ten men; you shall act as guide to them."

"I am perfectly willing. But it will take a week to beat up all the woods of the neighbourhood."

The old man's serenity enraged the officer; he saw, indeed, what a ridiculous proceeding such a hunt would be. It was at that moment that he caught sight of Françoise where she sat, pale and trembling, on her bench. His attention was aroused by the girl's anxious attitude. He was silent for a moment, glancing suspiciously from father to daughter and back again.

"Is not that man," he at last coarsely asked the old man, "your daughter's lover?"

Father Merlier's face became ashy pale, and he appeared for a moment as if about to throw himself on the officer and throttle him. He straightened himself up and made no reply. Françoise had hid her face in her hands.

"Yes, that is how it is," the Prussian continued; "you or your daughter have helped him to escape. You are his accomplices. For the last time, will you surrender him?"

The miller did not answer. He had turned away and was looking at the distant landscape with an air of indifference, just as if the officer were talking to some other person. That put the finishing touch on the latter's wrath.

"Very well, then!" he declared, "you shall be shot in his stead."

And again he ordered out the firing party. Father Merlier was as imperturbable as ever. He scarcely did so much as shrug his shoulders; the whole drama appeared to him to be in very doubtful taste. He probably believed that they would not take a man's life in that unceremonious manner. When the platoon was on the ground he gravely said:

"So, then, you are in earnest? Very well, I am willing it should be so. If you feel you must have a victim, it may as well be I as another."

But Françoise arose, greatly troubled, stammering: "Have mercy, sir: do not harm my father. Kill me instead of him. It was I who helped Dominique to escape; I am the only guilty one."

"Hold your tongue, my girl," Father Merlier exclaimed. "Why do you tell such a falsehood? She passed the night locked in her room, sir: I assure you that she does not speak the truth."

"I *am* speaking the truth," the girl eagerly replied. "I got down by the window; I incited Dominique to fly. It is the truth, the whole truth."

The old man's face was very white. He could read in her eyes that she was not lying, and her story terrified him. Ah, those children! those children! how they spoiled everything, with their hearts and their feelings! Then he said angrily:

"She is crazy; do not listen to her. It is a lot of trash she is telling you. Come, let us get through this business."

She persisted in her protestations; she kneeled, she raised her clasped hands in supplication. The officer stood tranquilly by and watched the harrowing scene.

"*Mon Dieu!*" he said at last, "I take your father because the other has escaped me. Bring me back the other man, and your father shall have his liberty."

She looked at him for a moment with eyes dilated by the horror which his proposal inspired in her.

"It is dreadful," she murmured. "Where can I look for Dominique now? He is gone; I know nothing beyond that."

"Well, make your choice between them; him or your father."

"Oh, my God! how can I choose? Even if I knew where to find Dominique I could not choose. You are breaking my heart. I would rather die at once. Yes, it would be more quickly ended thus. Kill me, I beseech you, kill me——"

The officer finally became weary of this scene of despair and tears. He cried:

"Enough of this! I wish to treat you kindly; I will give you two hours. If your lover is not here within two hours, your father shall pay the penalty that he has incurred."

And he ordered Father Merlier away to the room that had served as a prison for Dominique. The old man asked for tobacco, and began to smoke. There was no trace of emotion to be described on his impassive face. Only when he was alone he wept two big tears that coursed slowly down his cheeks. His poor, dear child, what a fearful trial she was enduring!

Françoise remained in the courtyard. Prussian soldiers passed back and forth, laughing. Some of them addressed her with coarse pleasantries which she did not understand. Her gaze was bent upon the door through which her father had disappeared, and with a slow movement she raised her hand to her forehead, as if to keep it from bursting. The officer turned sharply on his heel, and said to her:

"You have two hours. Try to make good use of them."

She had two hours. The words kept buzzing, buzzing in her ears. Then she went forth mechanically from the courtyard; she walked straight ahead with no definite end. Where was she to go? what was she to do? She did not even endeavour to arrive at any decision, for she felt how utterly useless were her efforts. And yet she would have liked to see Dominique; they could have come to some understanding together, perhaps they might have hit on some plan to extricate them from their difficulties. And so, amid the confusion of her whirling thoughts, she took her way downwards to the bank of the Morelle, which she crossed below the dam by means of some stepping-stones which were there. Proceeding onwards, still involuntarily, she came to the first willow, at the corner of the meadow, and stooping down, beheld a sight that made her grow deathly pale—a pool of blood. It was the spot. And she followed the track that Dominique had left in the tall grass; it was evident that he had run, for the footsteps that crossed the meadow in a diagonal line were separated from one another by wide intervals. Then, beyond that point, she lost the trace, but thought she had discovered it again in an adjoining field. It led her onwards to the border of the forest, where the trail came abruptly to an end.

Though conscious of the futility of the proceeding, Françoise penetrated into the wood. It was a comfort for her to be alone. She sat down for a moment, then, reflecting that time was passing, rose again to her feet. How long was it since she left the mill? Five minutes, or a half-hour? She had lost all idea of time. Perhaps Dominique had sought concealment in a clearing that she knew of, where they had gone together one afternoon and eaten hazel nuts. She directed her step towards the clearing; she searched it thoroughly. A blackbird flew out, whistling his sweet and melancholy note; that was all. Then she thought that he might have taken refuge in a hollow among the rocks where

he went sometimes with his gun, but the spot was untenanted. What use was there in looking for him? She would never find him, and little by little the desire to discover the hiding-place became a passionate longing. She proceeded at a more rapid pace. The idea suddenly took possession of her that he had climbed into a tree, and thenceforth she went along with eyes raised aloft and called him by name every fifteen or twenty steps, so that he might know she was near him. The cuckoos answered her; a breath of air that rustled the leaves made her think that he was there and was coming down to her. Once she even imagined that she saw him; she stopped with a sense of suffocation, with a desire to run away. What was she to say to him? Had she come there to take him back with her and have him shot? Oh! no, she would not mention those things; she would not tell him that he must fly, that he must not remain in the neighbourhood. Then she thought of her father awaiting her return, and the reflection caused her most bitter anguish. She sank upon the turf, weeping hot tears, crying aloud:

"My God! My God! why am I here?"

It was a mad thing for her to have come. And as if seized with sudden panic, she ran hither and thither. She sought to make her way out of the forest. Three times she lost her way, and had begun to think she was never to see the mill again, when she came out into a meadow, directly opposite Rocreuse. As soon as she caught sight of the village she stopped. Was she going to return alone?

She was standing there when she heard a voice calling her by name, softly:

"Françoise! Françoise!"

And she beheld Dominique raising his head above the edge of a ditch. Just God! she had found him.

Could it be, then, that Heaven willed his death? She suppressed a cry that rose to her lips, and slipped into the ditch beside him.

"You were looking for me?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied bewilderedly, scarcely knowing what she was saying.

"Ah! what has happened?"

She stammered, with eyes downcast: "Why, nothing; I was anxious, I wanted to see you."

Thereupon, his fears alleviated, he went on to tell her how it was that he had remained in the vicinity. He was alarmed for them. Those rascally Prussians were not above wreaking their vengeance on women and old men. All had ended well, however, and he added, laughing:

"The wedding will be put off for a week, that's all."

He became serious, however, upon noticing that her dejection did not pass away.

"But what is the matter? You are concealing something from me."

"No, I give you my word I am not. I am tired; I ran all the way here."

He kissed her, saying it was imprudent for them both to talk there any longer, and was about to climb out of the ditch in order to return to the forest. She stopped him; she was trembling violently.

"Listen, Dominique; perhaps it will be as well for you to stay here, after all. There is no one looking for you; you have nothing to fear."

"Françoise, you are concealing something from me," he said again.

Again she protested that she was concealing nothing. She only liked to know that he was near her. And there were other reasons still that she gave in stammering accents. Her manner was so strange that no consideration could now have induced him to go away. He believed, moreover, that the French would return presently. Troops had been seen over towards Sauval.

"Ah! let them make haste; let them come as quickly as possible," she murmured fervently.

At that moment the clock of the church at Rocreuse struck eleven; the strokes reached them, clear and distinct. She arose in terror; it was two hours since she had left the mill.

"Listen," she said, with feverish rapidity, "should we need you, I will go up to my room and wave my handkerchief from the window."

And she started off homewards at a run, while Dominique, greatly disturbed in mind, stretched himself at length beside the ditch to watch the mill. Just as she was about to enter the village Françoise encountered an old beggar man, Father Bontemps, who knew everyone and everything in that part of the country. He saluted her; he had just seen the miller, he said, surrounded by a crowd of Prussians; then, making numerous signs of the cross and mumbling some inarticulate words, he went his way.

"The two hours are up," the officer said when Françoise made her appearance.

Father Merlier was there, seated on the bench beside the well. He was smoking still. The young girl again proffered her supplication, kneeling before the officer and weeping. Her wish was to gain time. The hope that she might yet behold the return of the French had been gaining strength in her bosom, and amid her tears and sobs she thought she could distinguish in the distance the cadenced tramp of an advancing army. Oh! if they would but come and deliver them all from their fearful trouble!

"Hear me, sir: grant us an hour, just one little hour. Surely you will not refuse to grant us an hour!"

But the officer was inflexible. He even ordered two men to lay hold of her and take her away, in order that they might proceed undisturbed with the execution of the old man. Then a dreadful conflict took place in Françoise's heart. She could not allow her father to be murdered in that manner; no, no, she would die in company with Dominique rather; and she was just darting away in the

direction of her room in order to signal to her *fiancé*, when Dominique himself entered the courtyard.

The officer and his soldiers gave a great shout of triumph, but he, as if there had been no soul there but Françoise, walked straight up to her: he was perfectly calm, and his face wore a slight expression of sternness.

"You did wrong," he said. "Why did you not bring me back with you? Had it not been for Father Bontemps I should have known nothing of all this. Well, I am here, at all events."

V

It was three o'clock. The heavens were piled high with great black clouds, the tail-end of a storm that had been raging somewhere in the vicinity. Beneath the coppery sky and ragged scud the valley of Rocreuse, so bright and smiling in the sunlight, became a grim chasm, full of sinister shadows. The Prussian officer had done nothing with Dominique beyond placing him in confinement, giving no indication of his ultimate purpose in regard to him. Françoise, since noon, had been suffering unendurable agony; notwithstanding her father's entreaties, she would not leave the courtyard. She was waiting for the French troops to appear, but the hours slipped by, night was approaching, and she suffered all the more since it appeared as if the time thus gained would have no effect on the final result.

About three o'clock, however, the Prussians began to make their preparations for departure. The officer had gone to Dominique's room and remained closeted with him for some minutes, as he had done the day before. Françoise knew that the young man's life was hanging in the balance; she clasped her hands and put up fervent prayers. Beside her sat Father Merlier, rigid and silent, declining, like the true peasant he was, to attempt any interference with accomplished facts.

"Oh! my God! my God!" Françoise exclaimed, "they are going to kill him!"

The miller drew her to him, and took her on his lap as if she had been a little child. At this juncture the officer came from the room, followed by two men conducting Dominique between them.

"Never, never!" the latter exclaimed. "I am ready to die."

"You had better think the matter over," the officer replied. "I shall have no trouble in finding someone else to render us the service which you refuse. I am generous with you; I offer you your life. It is simply a matter of guiding us across the forest to Montredon; there must be paths."

Dominique made no answer.

"Then you persist in your obstinacy?"

"Shoot me, and let's have done with it," he replied.

Françoise, in the distance, entreated her lover with clasped hands; she was forgetful of all considerations save one—she would have had him commit a treason. But Father Merlier seized her hands, that the Prussians might not see the wild gestures of a woman whose mind was disordered by her distress.

"He is right," he murmured, "it is best for him to die."

The firing party was in readiness. The officer still had hopes of bringing Dominique over, and was waiting to see him exhibit some signs of weakness. Deep silence prevailed. Heavy peals of thunder were heard in the distance, the fields and woods lay lifeless beneath the sweltering heat. And it was in the midst of this oppressive silence that suddenly the cry arose:

"The French! the French!"

It was a fact; they were coming. The line of red trousers could be seen advancing along the Sauval road, at the edge of the forest. In the mill the confusion was extreme; the

Prussian soldiers ran to and fro, giving vent to guttural cries. Not a shot had been fired as yet.

"The French! the French!" cried Françoise, clapping her hands for joy. She was like a woman possessed. She had escaped from her father's embrace and was laughing boisterously, her arms raised high in the air. They had come at last, then, and had come in time, since Dominique was still there, alive!

A crash of musketry that rang in her ears like a thunder-clap caused her to suddenly turn her head. The officer had muttered, "We will finish this business first," and with his own hands pushing Dominique up against the wall of a shed, had given the command to the squad to fire. When Françoise turned, Dominique was lying on the ground, pierced by a dozen bullets.

She did not shed a tear; she stood there like one suddenly rendered senseless. Her eyes were fixed and staring, and she went and seated herself beneath the shed, a few steps from the lifeless body. She looked at it wistfully; now and then she would make a movement with her hands in an aimless, childish way. The Prussians had seized Father Merlier as a hostage.

It was a pretty fight. The officer, perceiving that he could not retreat without being cut to pieces, rapidly made the best disposition possible of his men; it was as well to sell their lives dearly. The Prussians were now the defenders of the mill, and the French were the attacking party. The musketry fire began with unparalleled fury; for half an hour there was no lull in the storm. Then a deep report was heard, and a ball carried away a main branch of the old elm. The French had artillery; a battery, in position just beyond the ditch where Dominique had concealed himself, commanded the main street of Rocreuse. The conflict could not last long after that.

Ah! the poor old mill! The cannon balls raked it from wall to wall. Half the roof was carried away; two of the

walls fell in. But it was on the side towards the Morelle that the damage was most lamentable. The ivy, torn from the tottering walls, hung in tatters, débris of every description floated away upon the bosom of the stream, and through a great breach Françoise's chamber was visible, with its little bed, the snow-white curtains of which were carefully drawn. Two balls struck the old wheel in quick succession, and it gave one parting groan; the buckets were carried away down stream, the frame was crushed into a shapeless mass. It was the soul of the stout old mill parting from the body.

Then the French came forward to carry the place by storm. There was a mad hand-to-hand conflict with the bayonet. Under the dull sky the pretty valley became a huge slaughter-pen; the broad meadows looked on in horror, with their great isolated trees and their rows of poplars, dotting them with shade, while to right and left the forest was like the walls of a tilting ground enclosing the combatants, and in Nature's universal panic the gentle murmur of the springs and watercourses sounded like sobs and wails.

Françoise had not stirred from the shed where she remained hanging over Dominique's body. Father Merlier had met his death from a stray bullet. Then the French captain, the Prussians being exterminated and the mill on fire, entered the courtyard at the head of his men. It was the first success that he had gained since the breaking out of the war, so, all inflamed with enthusiasm, drawing himself up to the full height of his lofty stature, he laughed pleasantly, as a handsome cavalier like him might laugh. Then, perceiving poor idiotic Françoise where she crouched between the corpses of her father and her betrothed, among the smoking ruins of the mill, he saluted her gallantly with his sword, and shouted:

"Victory! Victory!"

FRANÇOIS COPPÉE

(1842–1908)

***

THE WHITE FROCK

THOSE tobacco-juice coloured Brazilians, behung with gold chains and bulging with pocket-books full of bank-notes, think they know Paris when they have seen an operetta from the boxes, been round the "parsley" at the Bois de Boulogne, and supped at a night restaurant. We are so boastful of our vices that we are glad to give the title of Parisian to anyone who sees a pun without explanation and knows the price of a popular beauty. But in reality, a whole life spent in observation would not be long enough to explore the depths of this monster city. Every district, every street, indeed, has its own personal physiognomy, its peculiar character. The difference in the types you meet is so marked that it is impossible to confuse them. How surprised a sauntering idler would be if he met an outside stockbroker from the Bourse in the peaceful quadrangle of the Institut!

The infinite variety of the streets of this great town is an inexhaustible source of interest to the true Parisian, the Parisian of Paris. If he is gifted with any imaginative capacity, he need never run short of new impressions, as fresh and lively as if he were a traveller who had arrived but yesterday. I myself was born in Paris; I have always lived there; I might lament, like Alfred de Musset, that I knew every inch of its pavements; and I am continually being astonished at the discoveries I make on my adventurous travels. Did I not find the soundless melancholy of a Venetian canal behind the Gobelins factory? and at Grenelle, within a step of the Champs de Mars, a Cairene

city square, scorching in the sunshine—exactly the background for a picture of General Kléber assassinated with six dagger-thrusts by Suleiman-el-Habbi the fanatic?

When I came to live in this deserted corner of the faubourg Saint Germain, where I have been for ten years, I fell in love with the rue Rousselet, a singularly quiet, almost rural, street which opens immediately upon my front door. In the seventeenth century it was named the Impasse des Vaches, and in those days, no doubt, it was merely a miry cart-track. Several noblemen, however, had already built their "country houses" hereabouts. Upon this spot died Madame de la Sablière, the worthy friend of La Fontaine, in her dwelling "near the Incurables." A great house of the eighteenth century, at the corner of rue Oudinot, became the hospital of the Frères Saint-Jean de Dieu, and the trees of their beautiful garden overhang the old tumble-down wall that runs nearly the whole length of rue Rousselet on the right hand. On the other side is a row of mean tenements inhabited by working men and clerks, and overlooking the Friars' Garden. The street is very badly paved; it indulges in a side-walk only here and there, and it was one of the last to see the disappearance of the ancient lamp-posts with crossbeam and pulley. There are few shops, and those of the poorest: a cobbler's stall, the black hole of a coal-merchant from Auvergne, the public-house at the corner with the classic sign "Au bon Coing," and some dismal grocers' windows with bottles of barley-sugar, which has melted under the sun of twenty summers and frozen again through twenty winters, side by side with cheap prints—a sheet of hussars in the uniform of 1840, or the authentic effigy of the Wandering Jew, twopence coloured, and framed in verses from the famous ballad. Clothes hang out to dry from the windows, fowls scratch in the gutter; you could believe yourself in the suburbs of a distant country town, one of those suburbs that stretch out into the fields where the borough reverts to its ancestral village type.

As hardly one vehicle in a quarter of an hour passes along this roadway, children are allowed to play in the street. There are plenty of them in neighbourhoods of the lower class, for the poor are prolific and know not the doctrine of Malthus. They take no thought to provide for the "nipper" or the baby-girl, who will be apprenticed at twelve and wage-earners at sixteen. There is no working-man's house where you hear it said, as in Gabrielle:

> "Si tout va de belle façon,
> Nous pourrons nous donner le luxe d'un garçon."

So, in the nooks of the old wall, under the wreck of a cart, what splendid games of marbles they have! How dreadfully they wear out the seats of their breeches! And at four o'clock, when the Friars' school in the Rue Vannet breaks up, the whole street crawls with gutter-snipes. I have come to know them by going and coming among them, by taking notice of their smiles. They have come to know me too, and I am often obliged to interrupt a chain of thought and reply to a "Good-day, monsieur," tossed me by a little minx in a boy's cap, or a young scamp in trousers too big for him. At Corpus Christi, when they set up their little chapels at the front door, with a white cloth, a cast of the Madonna, and two tiny leaden candlesticks, they run after me with a saucer and rattle my penny in it joyfully. Indeed they treat me as a neighbour and a friend, as I pass to and fro, neither thinking of them nor interfering with them. On September days, when it is windy, the young ragamuffins pull their kite-strings aside to make way for me, and on summer evenings the little girl who shouts for "pepper" as she skips, will stop to let me step over the skipping-rope.

Thus it was that I came to notice the crippled child. It was long ago; I had recently settled in the neighbourhood, and she must have been eight or ten at the time. It was not she, poor thing! who shouted for "pepper." She was sitting on a kerb-stone, in deep mourning; her father,

a journeyman carpenter, had just died; her little crutch was in her lap, and she was watching the others at their play. She touched my heart, so sorrowful and good she looked, with big blue eyes in a pale little face and plaits of chestnut hair under her black hood. After a while she must have made some vague guess at my feelings from the glance I gave her, and would reply with a pathetic smile. I used to say to her as I passed, "Good-morning, little one!"

Time passed—two or three years slipped by so quickly!—and one Thursday morning in May, when the Friars' Garden was fragrant with spring leafage and gossamer threads floated in the air, I perceived, on coming out of my house, that the street wore an unwonted air of festivity. Of course! it was the day for the children's First Communion. The working man who read the papers and demolished a Jesuit to his supper every evening might protest; but "we're not heathens!" cried the mother, and the children went to catechism in spite of him. Moreover, the children's First Communion is a chance for wetting the whistle and having a little blow-out. The radical cobbler, smoking his pipe on the threshold of his shop, might shrug his shoulders as he pleased and grumble "Damn it all" between his teeth; but none the less the street came out in its Sunday best. Hurry up, then, little laundress, running along there with a shirt as stiff as a breastplate spread out on your two hands; be quick! your customer has done his shaving before the looking-glass that hangs to the latch of the casement window and he'll be getting fidgety. There is a bustle, too, at the pastry-cook's in the Rue de Sèvres; the sausage-rolls were ordered yesterday evening; and the greengrocer at No. 9 is nearly going crazy because her almond-cake has been forgotten. At the barber's, now—the blue-painted shop where the copper shaving-dish waves in the spring breeze—there is still a strong smell of singed hair, but work has been finished this long while, and the whole tribe of urchins trimmed and curled by seven this

morning. And now the business is over; they are coming back from church, and people are crowding to the windows to see the procession go past.

How fine the boys look, in their new clothes and their satin sleeve-straps with gold fringe, all except Victor, the cabinet-maker's son, who has just got a box on each ear. "There! how silly to let his bread and jam drop on his trousers. He won't do it again, the booby, that'll teach him." But aren't the girls in white pretty? Especially the fair ones! How sweetly the muslin veils become them; and well they know it, the little flirts! They droop their eyes to make themselves look more maidenly, and, moreover, to peep at their cotton gloves, the first they have ever worn in their lives. The dark ones, well, they rather suggest flies in a milk-jug; but that doesn't matter; their mothers are just as proud of them. Oh, those poor mothers! They have dressed up for the occasion, and sport costumes that tell wonderful tales of poverty and pinching. There, now, is a velvet mantle that must date from the Exhibition of 1867; and there, again, is a French cashmere that certainly knows the road to the pawnshop. Never mind! Whatever they wear, the little girls with them are in brand-new clothes; and when the mantle says to the cashmere, "Your little lady is coming along finely," the cashmere answers in a gratified tone, "Well, she ought to do; she's getting on for thirteen." And the mantle caps it with, "How they do grow, to be sure!" Well, it is a grand day for everybody, and the fathers—oh, those men don't believe in anything!—they make fun of the ceremony at the wine-seller's; but it is none the less true that just now, in church, when the organ played with the swell shut and the children marched up to the altar in Indian file, boys on one side, girls on the other, with candles alight in their hands, every one of the mothers was in tears.

I soon recognized my little cripple in the white mist of communicants. Was it by the black crutch with which she

limped along, or by the widow's weeds of her poor old mother who held her by the hand? But she seemed to me more innocent, purer, whiter than the rest. I thought, too, that she felt it more, that she was more thoughtful than her companions; her childlike face had an innocent, rapt expression which might have tempted Holbein to paint it.

That morning I gave her a warmer "Good-day!" than usual, and as I went my way I was quite glad to think that she as well had got her white frock. A white frock! That is what poor folk's daughters think the ideal dress.

Since then more than one spring has blossomed, and on fine May mornings, more than once the fragrant wind has fluttered the white veils of the communicants in our street. Years have passed; years with their springs, and their winters too; things have changed; people have grown old in this peaceful neighbourhood. Other children still play marbles under the old cart, but the barber has shut his shop. The radical cobbler still smokes his pipe on the threshold of his booth, but his beard has grown grey. As time went on, one day we read a black-bordered notice stuck with four wafers on the closed shutters of the greengrocer's, at No. 9; and now a laundress has set up there, in opposition to the old one who lives at the other side of the street. But she will not succeed, for Mother Vernier, my housekeeper (she has a devil of a tongue and I advise you to beware of it), declares that the new-comer is a careless slut who has ruined a white jacket and that her workgirls are no better than they should be, always carrying on with the policeman—you know the big, fair man with the medals, he that has such a fine drooping moustache—a drunkard's moustache! But in spite of all, the street has kept very nearly the same appearance it always had, and the Friars' wall is gradually crumbling away under the saxifrages.

But the little cripple? Alas! she has hardly grown taller, though she is quite a big girl now. Counting on my fingers I reckon she must be nearly twenty. When I meet her now,

limping more heavily on her crutch—a new crutch, a little larger than the old one—I daren't say, "Good-morning, little one!" I can do no more than lift my hat. But indeed she comes out seldom. Her mother now keeps the door at the bookbinder's, and the porter's lodge has a window that looks on the street, but it is too high for me to glance in as I pass. I only know my little friend is there by the never-ending whir of her sewing machine. She works for the ready-made clothes shop, and it seems she earns fairly good wages. They tell me she is much more crippled than I thought; one of her legs is quite withered. She will never marry. What a pity!

Meantime, nearly all the girls who went to their First Communion with her have already worn their second white frock, their wedding dress. Only last Saturday the grocer's wife married her daughter to the senior shop-boy; I always expected it would end like that. On Sunday evenings, when the mother took the air on the doorstep and the youngsters played at battledore, they always sent the shuttlecock into the gateway at No. 23. It is as dark as night there and they used to disappear together, ostensibly to find the shuttlecock. How malicious people can be! As I was saying, the grocer's wife did it all in fine style: they went round the lake in a carriage and pair, and had dinner at Porte Maillot. Well, just as the bride was getting into the carriage, with her white silk train, and the orange blossoms in her hair—she always did swagger, that big red-haired girl—I saw my little cripple standing a few steps away, leaning on her crutch, looking on with longing eyes.

Poor thing! She will soon be the last girl of her age in our street who will have worn a white frock only once in her life.

ANATOLE FRANCE

(1844–1924)

THE PROCURATOR OF JUDÆA

(Translated by FREDERIC CHAPMAN)

L. ÆLIUS LAMIA, born in Italy of illustrious parents, had not yet discarded the *toga prætexta* when he set out for the schools of Athens to study philosophy. Subsequently he took up his residence at Rome, and in his house on the Esquiline, amid a circle of youthful wastrels, abandoned himself to licentious courses. But being accused of engaging in criminal relations with Lepida, the wife of Sulpicius Quirinus, a man of consular rank, and being found guilty, he was exiled by Tiberius Cæsar. At that time he was just entering his twenty-fourth year. During the eighteen years that his exile lasted he traversed Syria, Palestine, Cappadocia, and Armenia, and made prolonged visits to Antioch, Cæsarea, and Jerusalem. When, after the death of Tiberius, Caius was raised to the purple, Lamia obtained permission to return to Rome. He even regained a portion of his possessions. Adversity had taught him wisdom.

He avoided all intercourse with the wives and daughters of Roman citizens, made no efforts towards obtaining office, held aloof from public honours, and lived a secluded life in his house on the Esquiline. Occupying himself with the task of recording all the remarkable things he had seen during his distant travels, he turned, as he said, the vicissitudes of his years of expiation into a diversion for his hours of rest. In the midst of these calm employments, alternating with assiduous study of the works of Epicurus, he recognized with a mixture of surprise and vexation that

age was stealing upon him. In his sixty-second year, being afflicted with an illness which proved in no slight degree troublesome, he decided to have recourse to the waters at Baiæ. The coast at that point, once frequented by the halcyon, was at this date the resort of the wealthy Roman, greedy of pleasure. For a week Lamia lived alone, without a friend in the brilliant crowd. Then one day, after dinner, an inclination to which he yielded urged him to ascend the incline, which, covered with vines that resembled bacchantes, looked out upon the waves.

Having reached the summit he seated himself by the side of a path beneath a terebinth, and let his glances wander over the lovely landscape. To his left, livid and bare, the Phlegræan plain stretched out towards the ruins of Cumæ. On his right, Cape Misenum plunged its abrupt spur beneath the Tyrrhenian sea. Beneath his feet luxurious Baiæ, following the graceful outline of the coast, displayed its gardens, its villas thronged with statues, its porticoes, its marble terraces along the shores of the blue ocean where the dolphins sported. Before him, on the other side of the bay, on the Campanian coast, gilded by the already sinking sun, gleamed the temples which far away rose above the laurels of Posilippo, whilst on the extreme horizon Vesuvius looked forth smiling.

Lamia drew from a fold of his toga a scroll containing the *Treatise upon Nature*, extended himself upon the ground, and began to read. But the warning cries of a slave necessitated his rising to allow of the passage of a litter which was being carried along the narrow pathway through the vineyards. The litter being uncurtained permitted Lamia to see stretched upon the cushions as it was borne nearer to him the figure of an elderly man of immense bulk, who, supporting his head on his hand, gazed out with a gloomy and disdainful expression. His nose, which was aquiline, and his chin, which was prominent, seemed desirous of meeting across his lips, and his jaws were powerful.

From the first moment Lamia was convinced that the face was familiar to him. He hesitated a moment before the name came to him. Then suddenly hastening towards the litter with a display of surprise and delight—

"Pontius Pilate!" he cried. "The gods be praised who have permitted me to see you once again!"

The old man gave a signal to the slaves to stop, and cast a keen glance upon the stranger who had addressed him.

"Pontius, my dear host," resumed the latter, "have twenty years so far whitened my hair and hollowed my cheeks that you no longer recognize your friend Ælius Lamia?"

At this name Pontius Pilate dismounted from the litter as actively as the weight of his years and the heaviness of his gait permitted him, and embraced Ælius Lamia again and again.

"Gods! what a treat it is to me to see you once more! But, alas! you call up memories of those long-vanished days when I was Procurator of Judæa in the province of Syria. Why, it must be thirty years ago that I first met you. It was at Cæsarea, whither you came to drag out your weary term of exile. I was fortunate enough to alleviate it a little, and out of friendship, Lamia, you followed me to that depressing place Jerusalem, where the Jews filled me with bitterness and disgust. You remained for more than ten years my guest and my companion, and in converse about Rome and things Roman we both of us managed to find consolation—you for your misfortunes, and I for my burdens of State."

Lamia embraced him afresh.

"You forget two things, Pontius; you are overlooking the facts that you used your influence on my behalf with Herod Antipas, and that your purse was freely open to me."

"Let us not talk of that," replied Pontius, "since after your return to Rome you sent me by one of your freedmen a sum of money which repaid me with usury."

"Pontius, I could never consider myself out of your debt by the mere payment of money. But tell me, have the gods fulfilled your desires? Are you in the enjoyment of all the happiness you deserve? Tell me about your family, your fortunes, your health."

"I have withdrawn to Sicily, where I possess estates, and where I cultivate wheat for the market. My eldest daughter, my best-beloved Pontia, who has been left a widow, lives with me, and directs my household. The gods be praised, I have preserved my mental vigour; my memory is not in the least degree enfeebled. But old age always brings in its train a long procession of griefs and infirmities. I am cruelly tormented with gout. And at this very moment you find me on my way to the Phlegræan plain in search of a remedy for my sufferings. From that burning soil, whence at night flames burst forth, proceed acrid exhalations of sulphur, which, so they say, ease the pains and restore suppleness to the stiffened joints. At least, the physicians assure me that it is so."

"May you find it so in your case, Pontius. But, despite the gout and its burning torments, you scarcely look as old as myself, although in reality you must be my senior by ten years. Unmistakably you have retained a greater degree of vigour than I ever possessed, and I am overjoyed to find you looking so hale. Why, dear friend, did you retire from the public service before the customary age? Why, on resigning your governorship in Judæa, did you withdraw to a voluntary exile on your Sicilian estates? Give me an account of your doings from the moment that I ceased to be a witness of them. You were preparing to suppress a Samaritan rising when I set out for Cappadocia, where I hoped to draw some profit from the breeding of horses and mules. I have not seen you since then. How did that expedition succeed? Pray tell me. Everything interests me that concerns you in any way."

Pontius Pilate sadly shook his head.

" My natural disposition," he said, " as well as a sense of duty, impelled me to fulfil my public responsibilities, not merely with diligence, but even with ardour. But I was pursued by unrelenting hatred. Intrigues and calumnies cut short my career in its prime, and the fruit it should have looked to bear has withered away. You ask me about the Samaritan insurrection. Let us sit down on this hillock. I shall be able to give you an answer in few words. Those occurrences are as vividly present to me as if they had happened yesterday.

" A man of the people, of persuasive speech—there are many such to be met with in Syria—induced the Samaritans to gather together in arms on Mount Gerizim (which in that country is looked upon as a holy place) under the promise that he would disclose to their sight the sacred vessels which in the ancient days of Evander and our father, Æneas, had been hidden away by an eponymous hero, or rather a tribal deity, named Moses. Upon this assurance the Samaritans rose in rebellion; but having been warned in time to forestall them, I dispatched detachments of infantry to occupy the mountain, and stationed cavalry to keep the approaches to it under observation.

" These measures of prudence were urgent. The rebels were already laying siege to the town of Tyrathaba, situated at the foot of Mount Gerizim. I easily dispersed them, and stifled the as yet scarcely organized revolt. Then, in order to give a forcible example with as few victims as possible, I handed over to execution the leaders of the rebellion. But you are aware, Lamia, in what strait dependence I was kept by the proconsul Vitellius, who governed Syria not in, but against the interests of Rome, and looked upon the provinces of the Empire as territories which could be farmed out to tetrarchs. The head-men among the Samaritans, in their resentment against me, came and fell at his feet lamenting. To listen to them, nothing had been further from their thoughts than to disobey Cæsar. It was I who had pro-

voked the rising, and it was purely in order to withstand my violence that they had gathered together round Tyrathaba. Vitellius listened to their complaints, and handing over the affairs of Judæa to his friend Marcellus, commanded me to go and justify my proceedings before the Emperor himself. With a heart overflowing with grief and resentment I took ship. Just as I approached the shores of Italy, Tiberius, worn out with age and the cares of empire, died suddenly on the self-same Cape Misenum, whose peak we see from this very spot magnified in the mists of evening. I demanded justice of Caius, his successor, whose perception was naturally acute, and who was acquainted with Syrian affairs. But marvel with me, Lamia, at the maliciousness of fortune, resolved on my discomfiture. Caius then had in his suite at Rome the Jew Agrippa, his companion, the friend of his childhood, whom he cherished as his own eyes. Now Agrippa favoured Vitellius, inasmuch as Vitellius was the enemy of Antipas, whom Agrippa pursued with his hatred. The Emperor adopted the prejudices of his beloved Asiatic and refused even to listen to me. There was nothing for me to do but bow beneath the stroke of unmerited misfortune. With tears for my meat and gall for my portion, I withdrew to my estates in Sicily, where I should have died of grief if my sweet Pontia had not come to console her father. I have cultivated wheat, and succeeded in producing the fullest ears in the whole province. But now my life is ended; the future will judge between Vitellius and me."

"Pontius," replied Lamia, "I am persuaded that you acted towards the Samaritans according to the rectitude of your character, and solely in the interests of Rome. But were you not perchance on that occasion a trifle too much influenced by that impetuous courage which has always swayed you? You will remember that in Judæa it often happened that I who, younger than you, should naturally have been more impetuous than you, was obliged to urge you to clemency and suavity."

"Suavity towards the Jews!" cried Pontius Pilate. "Although you have lived amongst them, it seems clear that you ill understand those enemies of the human race. Haughty and at the same time base, combining an invincible obstinacy with a despicably mean spirit, they weary alike your love and your hatred. My character, Lamia, was formed upon the maxims of the divine Augustus. When I was appointed Procurator of Judæa, the world was already penetrated with the majestic ideal of the *Pax Romana*. No longer, as in the days of our internecine strife, were we witnesses to the sack of a province for the aggrandisement of a proconsul. I knew where my duty lay. I was careful that my actions should be governed by prudence and moderation. The gods are my witnesses that I was resolved upon mildness, and upon mildness only. Yet what did my benevolent intentions avail me? You were at my side, Lamia, when, at the outset of my career as ruler, the first rebellion came to a head. Is there any need for me to recall the details to you? The garrison had been transferred from Cæsarea to take up its winter quarters at Jerusalem. Upon the ensigns of the legionaries appeared the presentment of Cæsar. The inhabitants of Jerusalem, who did not recognize the indwelling divinity of the Emperor, were scandalized at this, as though, when obedience is compulsory, it were not less abject to obey a god than a man. The priests of their nation appeared before my tribunal imploring me with supercilious humility to have the ensigns removed from within the holy city. Out of reverence for the divine nature of Cæsar and the majesty of the empire, I refused to comply. Then the rabble made common cause with the priests, and all around the pretorium portentous cries of supplication arose. I ordered the soldiers to stack their spears in front of the tower of Antonia, and to proceed, armed only with sticks like lictors, to disperse the insolent crowd. But, heedless of blows, the Jews continued their entreaties, and the more obstinate amongst

them threw themselves on the ground and, exposing their throats to the rods, deliberately courted death. You were a witness of my humiliation on that occasion, Lamia. By the order of Vitellius I was forced to send the insignia back to Cæsarea. That disgrace I had certainly not merited. Before the immortal gods I swear that never once during my term of office did I flout justice and the laws. But I am grown old. My enemies and detractors are dead. I shall die unavenged. Who will now retrieve my character?"

He moaned and lapsed into silence. Lamia replied—

"That man is prudent who neither hopes nor fears anything from the uncertain events of the future. Does it matter in the least what estimate men may form of us hereafter? We ourselves are after all our own witnesses, and our own judges. You must rely, Pontius Pilate, on the testimony you yourself bear to your own rectitude. Be content with your own personal respect and that of your friends. For the rest, we know that mildness by itself will not suffice for the work of government. There is but little room in the actions of public men for that indulgence of human frailty which the philosophers recommend."

"We'll say no more at present," said Pontius. "The sulphureous fumes which rise from the Phlegræan plain are more powerful when the ground which exhales them is still warm beneath the sun's rays. I must hasten on. Adieu! But now that I have rediscovered a friend, I should wish to take advantage of my good fortune. Do me the favour, Ælius Lamia, to give me your company at supper at my house to-morrow. My house stands on the seashore, at the extreme end of the town in the direction of Misenum. You will easily recognize it by the porch, which bears a painting representing Orpheus surrounded by tigers and lions, whom he is charming with the strains from his lyre.

"Till to-morrow, Lamia," he repeated, as he climbed

once more into his litter. " To-morrow we will talk about Judæa."

The following day at the supper hour Lamia presented himself at the house of Pontius Pilate. Two couches only were in readiness for occupants. Creditably but simply equipped, the table held a silver service in which were set out beccaficos in honey, thrushes, oysters from the Lucrine lake, and lampreys from Sicily. As they proceeded with their repast, Pontius and Lamia interchanged inquiries with one another about their ailments, the symptoms of which they described at considerable length, mutually emulous of communicating the various remedies which had been recommended to them. Then, congratulating themselves on being thrown together once more at Baiæ, they vied with one another in praise of the beauty of that enchanting coast and the mildness of the climate they enjoyed. Lamia was enthusiastic about the charms of the courtesans who frequented the seashore laden with golden ornaments and trailing draperies of barbaric broidery. But the aged Procurator deplored the ostentation with which by means of trumpery jewels and filmy garments foreigners and even enemies of the empire beguiled the Romans of their gold. After a time they turned to the subject of the great engineering feats that had been accomplished in the country; the prodigious bridge constructed by Caius between Puteoli and Baiæ, and the canals which Augustus excavated to convey the waters of the ocean to Lake Avernus and the Lucrine lake.

" I also," said Pontius, with a sigh, " I also wished to set afoot public works of great utility. When, for my sins, I was appointed Governor of Judæa, I conceived the idea of furnishing Jerusalem with an abundant supply of pure water by means of an aqueduct. The elevation of the levels, the proportionate capacity of the various parts, the gradient for the brazen reservoirs to which the distribution pipes were to

be fixed—I had gone into every detail, and decided everything for myself with the assistance of mechanical experts. I had drawn up regulations for the superintendents so as to prevent individuals from making unauthorized depredations. The architects and the workmen had their instructions. I gave orders for the commencement of operations. But far from viewing with satisfaction the construction of that conduit, which was intended to carry to their town upon its massive arches not only water but health, the inhabitants of Jerusalem gave vent to lamentable outcries. They gathered tumultuously together, exclaiming against the sacrilege and impiousness, and, hurling themselves upon the workmen, scattered the very foundation stones. Can you picture to yourself, Lamia, a filthier set of barbarians? Nevertheless, Vitellius decided in their favour, and I received orders to put a stop to the work."

"It is a knotty point," said Lamia, "how far one is justified in devising things for the commonweal against the will of the populace."

Pontius Pilate continued as though he had not heard this interruption.

"Refuse an aqueduct! What madness! But whatever is of Roman origin is distasteful to the Jews. In their eyes we are an unclean race, and our very presence appears a profanation to them. You will remember that they would never venture to enter the pretorium for fear of defiling themselves, and that I was consequently obliged to discharge my magisterial functions in an open-air tribunal on that marble pavement your feet so often trod.

"They fear us and they despise us. Yet is not Rome the mother and warden of all those peoples who nestle smiling upon her venerable bosom? With her eagles in the van, peace and liberty have been carried to the very confines of the universe. Those whom we have subdued we look on as our friends, and we leave those conquered races, nay, we secure to them the permanence of their customs and

their laws. Did Syria, aforetime rent asunder by its rabble of petty kings, ever even begin to taste of peace and prosperity until it submitted to the armies of Pompey? And when Rome might have reaped a golden harvest as the price of her goodwill, did she lay hands on the hoards that swell the treasuries of barbaric temples? Did she despoil the shrine of Cybele at Pessinus, or the Morimene and Cilician sanctuaries of Jupiter, or the temple of the Jewish god at Jerusalem? Antioch, Palmyra, and Apamea, secure despite their wealth, and no longer in dread of the wandering Arab of the desert, have erected temples to the genius of Rome and the divine Cæsar. The Jews alone hate and withstand us. They withhold their tribute till it is wrested from them, and obstinately rebel against military service."

"The Jews," replied Lamia, "are profoundly attached to their ancient customs. They suspected you, unreasonably I admit, of a desire to abolish their laws and change their usages. Do not resent it, Pontius, if I say that you did not always act in such a way as to disperse their unfortunate illusion. It gratified you, despite your habitual self-restraint, to play upon their fears, and, more than once have I seen you betray in their presence the contempt with which their beliefs and religious ceremonies inspired you. You irritated them particularly by giving instructions for the sacerdotal garments and ornaments of their high priest to be kept in ward by your legionaries in the Antonine tower. One must admit that though they have never risen like us to an appreciation of things divine the Jews celebrate rites which their very antiquity renders venerable."

Pontius Pilate shrugged his shoulders.

"They have very little exact knowledge of the nature of the gods," he said. "They worship Jupiter, yet they abstain from naming him or erecting a statue of him. They do not even adore him under the semblance of a rude stone, as certain of the Asiatic peoples are wont to do. They know nothing of Apollo, of Neptune, of Mars, nor of

Pluto, nor of any goddess. At the same time, I am convinced that in days gone by they worshipped Venus. For even to this day their women bring doves to the altar as victims; and you know as well as I that the dealers who trade beneath the arcades of their temple supply those birds in couples for sacrifice. I have even been told that on one occasion some madman proceeded to overturn the stalls bearing these offerings, and their owners with them. The priests raised an outcry about it, and looked on it as a case of sacrilege. I am of opinion that their custom of sacrificing turtle-doves was instituted in honour of Venus. Why are you laughing, Lamia?"

"I was laughing," said Lamia, "at an amusing idea which, I hardly know how, just occurred to me. I was thinking that perchance some day the Jupiter of the Jews might come to Rome and vent his fury upon you. Why should he not? Asia and Africa have already enriched us with a considerable number of gods. We have seen temples in honour of Isis and the dog-faced Anubis erected in Rome. In the public squares, and even on the race-courses, you may run across the Bona Dea of the Syrians mounted on an ass. And did you never hear how, in the reign of Tiberius, a young patrician passed himself off as the horned Jupiter of the Egyptians, Jupiter Ammon, and in this disguise procured the favours of an illustrious lady who was too virtuous to deny anything to a god? Beware, Pontius, lest the invisible Jupiter of the Jews disembark some day on the quay at Ostia!"

At the idea of a god coming out of Judæa, a fleeting smile played over the severe countenance of the Procurator. Then he replied gravely—

"How would the Jews manage to impose their sacred law on outside peoples when they are in a perpetual state of tumult amongst themselves as to the interpretation of that law? You have seen them yourself, Lamia, in the public squares, split up into twenty rival parties, with staves in

their hands, abusing each other and clutching one another by the beard. You have seen them on the steps of the temple, tearing their filthy garments as a symbol of lamentation, with some wretched creature in a frenzy of prophetic exaltation in their midst. They have never realized that it is possible to discuss peacefully and with an even mind those matters concerning the divine which yet are hidden from the profane and wrapped in uncertainty. For the nature of the immortal gods remains hidden from us, and we cannot arrive at a knowledge of it. Though I am of opinion, none the less, that it is a prudent thing to believe in the providence of the gods. But the Jews are devoid of philosophy, and cannot tolerate any diversity of opinions. On the contrary, they judge worthy of the extreme penalty all those who on divine subjects profess opinions opposed to their law. And as, since the genius of Rome has towered over them, capital sentences pronounced by their own tribunals can only be carried out with the sanction of the proconsul or the procurator, they harry the Roman magistrate at any hour to procure his signature to their baleful decrees, they besiege the pretorium with their cries of 'Death!' A hundred times, at least, have I known them, mustered, rich and poor together, all united under their priests, make a furious onslaught on my ivory chair, seizing me by the skirts of my robe, by the thongs of my sandals, and all to demand of me—nay, to exact from me—the death sentence on some unfortunate whose guilt I failed to perceive, and as to whom I could only pronounce that he was as mad as his accusers. A hundred times, do I say! Not a hundred, but every day and all day. Yet it was my duty to execute their law as if it were ours, since I was appointed by Rome not for the destruction, but for the upholding of their customs, and over them I had the power of the rod and the axe. At the outset of my term of office I endeavoured to persuade them to hear reason; I attempted to snatch their miserable victims from death. But this show of mildness only irritated

them the more; they demanded their prey, fighting around me like a horde of vultures with wing and beak. Their priests reported to Cæsar that I was violating their law, and their appeals, supported by Vitellius, drew down upon me a severe reprimand. How many times did I long, as the Greeks used to say, to dispatch accusers and accused in one convoy to the crows!

"Do not imagine, Lamia, that I nourish the rancour of the discomfited, the wrath of the superannuated, against a people which in my person has prevailed against both Rome and tranquillity. But I foresee the extremity to which sooner or later they will reduce us. Since we cannot govern them, we shall be driven to destroy them. Never doubt it. Always in a state of insubordination, brewing rebellion in their inflammatory minds, they will one day burst forth upon us with a fury beside which the wrath of the Numidians and the mutterings of the Parthians are mere child's play. They are secretly nourishing preposterous hopes, and madly premeditating our ruin. How can it be otherwise, when, on the strength of an oracle, they are living in expectation of the coming of a prince of their own blood whose kingdom shall extend over the whole earth? There are no half measures with such a people. They must be exterminated. Jerusalem must be laid waste to the very foundation. Perchance, old as I am, it may be granted me to behold the day when her walls shall fall and the flames shall envelop her houses, when her inhabitants shall pass under the edge of the sword, when salt shall be strown on the place where once the temple stood. And in that day I shall at length be justified."

Lamia exerted himself to lead the conversation back to a less acrimonious note.

"Pontius," he said, "it is not difficult for me to understand both your long-standing resentment and your sinister forebodings. Truly, what you have experienced of the character of the Jews is nothing to their advantage. But I

lived in Jerusalem as an interested onlooker, and mingled freely with the people, and I succeeded in detecting certain obscure virtues in these rude folk which were altogether hidden from you. I have met Jews who were all mildness, whose simple manners and faithfulness of heart recalled to me what our poets have related concerning the Spartan lawgiver. And you yourself, Pontius, have seen perish beneath the cudgels of your legionaries simple-minded men who have died for a cause they believed to be just without revealing their names. Such men do not deserve our contempt. I am saying this because it is desirable in all things to preserve moderation and an even mind. But I own that I never experienced any lively sympathy for the Jews. The Jewesses, on the contrary, I found extremely pleasing. I was young then, and the Syrian women stirred all my senses to response. Their ruddy lips, their liquid eyes that shone in the shade, their sleepy gaze pierced me to the very marrow. Painted and stained, smelling of nard and myrrh, steeped in odours, their physcial attractions are both rare and delightful."

Pontius listened impatiently to these praises.

"I was not the kind of man to fall into the snares of the Jewish women," he said; "and since you have opened the subject yourself, Lamia, I was never able to approve of your laxity. If I did not express with sufficient emphasis formerly how culpable I held you for having intrigued at Rome with the wife of a man of consular rank, it was because you were then enduring heavy penance for your misdoings. Marriage from the patrician point of view is a sacred tie; it is one of the institutions which are the support of Rome. As to foreign women and slaves, such relations as one may enter into with them would be of little account were it not that they habituate the body to a humiliating effeminacy. Let me tell you that you have been too liberal in your offerings to the Venus of the Market-place; and what, above all, I blame in you is that you have not married

in compliance with the law and given children to the Republic, as every good citizen is bound to do."

But the man who had suffered exile under Tiberius was no longer listening to the venerable magistrate. Having tossed off his cup of Falernian, he was smiling at some image visible to his eye alone.

After a moment's silence he resumed in a very deep voice, which rose in pitch by little and little:

"With what languorous grace they dance, those Syrian women! I knew a Jewess at Jerusalem who used to dance in a poky little room, on a threadbare carpet, by the light of one smoky little lamp, waving her arms as she clanged her cymbals. Her loins arched, her head thrown back, and, as it were, dragged down by the weight of her heavy red hair, her eyes swimming with voluptuousness, eager, languishing, compliant, she would have made Cleopatra herself grow pale with envy. I was in love with her barbaric dances, her voice—a little raucous and yet so sweet—her atmosphere of incense, the semi-somnolescent state in which she seemed to live. I followed her everywhere. I mixed with the vile rabble of soldiers, conjurers, and extortioners with which she was surrounded. One day, however, she disappeared, and I saw her no more. Long did I seek her in disreputable alleys and taverns. It was more difficult to learn to do without her than to lose the taste for Greek wine. Some months after I lost sight of her, I learned by chance that she had attached herself to a small company of men and women who were followers of a young Galilean thaumaturgist. His name was Jesus; he came from Nazareth, and he was crucified for some crime, I don't quite know what. Pontius, do you remember anything about the man?"

Pontius Pilate contracted his brows, and his hand rose to his forehead in the attitude of one who probes the deeps of memory. Then after a silence of some seconds:

"Jesus?" he murmured, "Jesus—of Nazareth? I cannot call him to mind."

JORIS KARL HUYSMANS

(1848–1907)

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KNAPSACKS

(Translated by Henry Roche)

As soon as I had ended my studies, my parents thought it right to make me appear before a table covered with green cloth at which sat several old gentlemen anxious to inquire if I was sufficiently acquainted with dead languages to be promoted to the degree of Bachelor of Arts.

My examination proved satisfactory. A dinner, to which were invited all the elders of the family, celebrated my success. They expressed anxiety as to my future, and decided that I was to study law.

I managed to pass the first examination fairly well and spent the allowance for my second year's tuition fees with a fair-haired damsel who showed me her affection intermittently.

I frequented with assiduity the Quartier Latin, where I learned many things, among others to take an interest in the students who every evening, over their drinks, gave vent to their political views, and to get acquainted with the works of George Sand, Heine, Edgar Guinet and Henri Mürger.

I had reached the age of doing foolish things. This lasted about a year; the fruit of youth was ripening: the electoral contests at the close of the Empire left me cold; I was not the son of a senator, nor of an exile, and had only to maintain, under any kind of government, the traditions of mediocrity and penury which had long been followed by the family.

I had little taste for law. The Code, thought I, had been purposely drawn up with a view to furnishing certain people with the opportunity of arguing about its most insignificant details. It seems to me even now that no clearly written sentences could reasonably give occasion to such different interpretations.

I was trying hard to choose a not too distasteful profession when the late Emperor found me one: his bungling policy made me a soldier.

The war with Prussia broke out. To speak the truth, I did not understand what motives made this slaughter of men necessary. I felt no desire to kill others or to be killed by them. I was, however, enlisted among the Mobile Guards of the Seine and was ordered to report at 7 p.m. at the barracks in the Rue de Lourcine as soon as I had been provided with uniform and boots.

I was there punctually. After roll-call part of the regiment rushed out and filled the street. Crowds surged and wine-shops were filled in no time.

Huddled together, workmen in their smocks, workwomen in tatters, soldiers in belts and gaiters, unarmed, beat time with clashing glasses to the Marseillaise which they yelled out of tune. In their incredibly high képis provided with peaks resembling a blind man's shade, and tricoloured tin cockades, in dark blue tunics, with scarlet collars and braid, and light blue trousers with a red stripe, the Mobiles of the Seine howled at the moon before starting for the conquest of Prussia.

The uproar in the wine-shops was deafening, a hurly-burly of glasses, water-bottles, shouts, interrupted at times by the rattling of the windows beaten by the wind. The rolling of a drum was suddenly heard above the din. From the barracks issued forth a fresh column; then followed indescribable revelling and tippling. The soldiers who were drinking in the shops rushed out accompanied by their relatives and friends, who vied for the honour of carrying

their knapsacks; the ranks were broken up; it became a jumble of soldiers and citizens; mothers wept; fathers, less emotional, smelled of wine, while children jumped with joy and with their shrill voices shouted patriotic songs!

They went through Paris in disorder amid flashes of lightning, whose white zigzags lashed the tumultuous clouds.

Suffocating was the heat, heavy were the knapsacks. They stopped to drink at every street corner and at last reached the station at Aubervilliers. An interval of silence was broken by the sound of sobs that were again hushed by the howling of the Marseillaise, and we were at length driven into trucks like cattle. "Good-night, Jules! Good-bye! Mind you be good! Above all write to me!" We shook hands a last time, a whistle sounded: the station was behind us.

About fifty men had been shoved into our rolling truck: some shed bitter tears and were gibed at by others who, downright drunk, fixed lighted candles in their ammunition boxes and yelled at the top of their voices: "Down with Badinguet! Long live Rochefort!" Several were silent and dejected in a corner and kept their eyes on the floor that shook, raising a cloud of dust. The train suddenly halted and I got down. The night was dark—twenty-five minutes past midnight. Fields extended in all directions and afar, lit up by the flashes of lightning, a small house or a tree stood out suddenly on the stormy sky. Nothing was heard but the roar of the engine, out of whose funnel flew clouds of sparks which were scattered along the train like a bouquet of fireworks. We all alighted and went up to the engine, which loomed larger in the darkness and seemed immense. The halt lasted at least two hours. The signals shone out red and the driver was waiting for them to be changed. When they turned white we got into the trucks. Then a man ran up waving a lantern: he said a few words to the guard, who at once shunted the train to a siding, where we again stood still. None of us knew our

whereabouts. I got down once more, and sitting on an embankment I nibbled at a bit of bread and had a drink, when a dreadful hurricane came rushing from afar, roaring and spitting flames as it approached. It was an interminable artillery train passing at full speed, loaded with horses, men and cannon whose bronze necks gleamed in the welter of lights. Five minutes after, we moved on slowly, the halts becoming longer and longer. At last day broke, and leaning out of the window, fatigued by my night's shaking, I looked at the country around and beheld a succession of chalky plains stretching as far as the horizon, and a streak of pale green the colour of sickly turquoise, a flat, dull, unfertile region called Barren Champagne.

Gradually the sun waxed warmer; we rolled on and at last got to our destination! Having left the evening before at eight, we reached Châlons the next day at three. Two of the Mobiles were left behind: one had been pitched into a river from the top of a car and the other smashed his head against the edge of a bridge. The comrades having pillaged the sheds and gardens they had visited during the stoppages of the train, yawned, with lips puffed by wine and swollen eyes, or else played at throwing at each other from the end of the truck the stalks of shrubs, or the hen-coops they had stolen.

The arrival proved as disorderly as the departure had been. Nothing was ready: no canteen, no straw, no cloaks nor arms; we only found tents full of dung and lice left by troops just sent on to the frontier. We subsisted as well as we could for three days, eating a saveloy one day, drinking a bowl of coffee and milk another, unmercifully fleeced by the inhabitants, passing the night anyhow without straw or covering. This was not the way to make us appreciate the profession inflicted upon us.

As soon as they were billeted, the travelling companions separated: working men were placed in tents with other working men; men of a better class congregated in like

manner. In my tent we were well assorted, as we had managed to get rid of two fellows after making them drunk: they had smelt greatly in need of a foot-bath in consequence of prolonged and voluntary neglect of hygiene.

A day or two passed. We had to mount guard with pointed sticks; we were given plenty of brandy; the erstwhile starvelings were now decently fed; suddenly Marshal Canrobert ordered a grand review. I can see him on his high charger, bent down on the saddle, his hair blown about by the wind, his waxed moustache standing out on his pallid face. A mutiny broke out. Our wants were disregarded, and far from being persuaded by the Marshal that we were well looked after, we shouted in chorus, when he threatened to repress our complaints by force: "Rataplan, rataplan! Shoot a hundred thousand men! To Paris, to Paris!" Canrobert turned livid and cried out, reining in his horse in our midst: "Hats off to a Marshal of France!" Again the ranks hooted. Then, turning his charger, and followed by his scandalized staff, he threatened us with his finger, hissing between his clenched teeth: "You'll pay dearly for this, my little Parisians!"

Two days after this scene the icy camp water made me so ill that I was hurried off to hospital. Buckling up my knapsack after the doctor's examination, in charge of a corporal, I crawled away, dragging my legs and perspiring under my accoutrements. The hospital being cram-full, I was not admitted. So I betook myself to one of the nearest field ambulances, where, one bed being vacant, I was received. At last I unloaded my knapsack, and until the moment when the chief surgeon would forbid me to stir I strolled about the little garden which connected the various buildings. A door suddenly gave passage to a man with voluminous beard and sea-green eyes. He plunged his hands into the pockets of a long gambier-coloured cassock and cried out to me from as far off as he perceived me: "Eh! my man, what are you doing here?"

I went up to him and explained why I had come. He only gesticulated with his arms and shouted: "Not before they have given you your hospital clothes will you be allowed to walk in the garden." I returned to the house, where an attendant provided me with a long cassock, trousers, slippers and a long cap. I looked at myself in my little pocket mirror and realized what a fright I was. What a face! What a get-up! My eyes were sunken, my complexion pale, my hair clipped short, my nose shiny in its protuberant parts. Add to all this my long mouse-coloured cassock, my trousers of a ruddy yellow, my huge flat slippers, my gigantic cotton cap. In truth I cut an extremely ugly figure; I laughed outright and turned towards my nearest bed-fellow, a tall fellow of Jewish type, who was sketching my portrait in his note-book. We at once became friends. I told him my name was Eugène Lejantel; he replied that his was Francis Emonot. As we both knew a certain artist, we started an æsthetic conversation which made us forget our misfortunes. In the evening boiled beef with black lentils was distributed; they gave us full glasses of clear liquorice-water. After this meal I undressed, glad to be able to stretch myself in a bed, rid of my uniform and my boots.

The next morning at six o'clock I was roused by a loud slam of the door and by noisy voices. I sat up, rubbed my eyes and perceived the gentleman I had seen last evening in his gambier-coloured overall, advancing majestically, followed by a train of assistants. It was the chief surgeon.

He had hardly entered the room when, rolling his dull green eyes from right to left and from left to right, he thrust his hands into his pockets and shouted:

"Number one, show your leg, your dirty leg! Ah! that leg is not doing well; the wound is running like a stream. Pure water-lotion, lint, half rations, a good liquorice tea."

"Number two, show your throat, your dirty throat!

It's getting worse and worse. To-morrow we must remove those tonsils."

"But, doctor . . .!"

"What! Am I speaking to you? If you add another word, I shall put you on low diet."

"But still . . ."

"This man to be kept on low diet! Write down: diet, gargling, a good liquorice tea."

Such was his way of examining the patients, prescribing his good liquorice tea for every case, whether venereal disease, fever or dysentery.

It was difficult for us to get on with our neighbours. We were twenty-one of us in the ward. On my left slept the artist; on the other side a big fellow, a bugler, whose face was as pitted as a thimble and as yellow as a glass of gall. He united two trades, that of a cobbler by day and procurer of loose women at night. He was very funny, however, and skipped about on his head or hands; with the utmost naïveté he told us how, while cobbling, he attended to his saucepans; with touching voice he sang a sentimental song:

> The only friend that I have kept
> In my misfortunes is a swallow.

I obtained his good graces by giving him twenty sous to buy a book, and we were fortunate in being on good terms with him, as the other occupants of the room, several of whom were solicitors in the rue Maubuée, were much inclined to pick quarrels with us.

One evening, for instance, on August 15, Francis Emonot threatened to do violence to two men who had cribbed his towel. A formidable uproar ensued in the dormitory. Insults followed in quick succession, they calling us "cads!" or "duchesses!" As we were only two against nineteen, we were about to receive a sound thrashing, when the bugler interposed, took the most infuriated men aside and coaxed them into returning the stolen towel. To celebrate the

reconciliation that followed this scene, Francis and I contributed three francs each, and it was agreed that the bugler, with the help of his comrades, would slip out and bring back meat and wine.

Light had disappeared from the chief surgeon's window, the dispenser had at last put out his lamp, when we crawled out beyond the thickets, looked around, and signalled to the men. They glided along the walls, met with no sentinel on the way, and mounting on each other's shoulders, jumped into the open. An hour later they came back with provisions galore, which were passed on to us, and we all returned to the dormitory. The two night-lights were extinguished, candle-ends were lighted on the floor and we formed a circle round my bed in our night-shirts. We had absorbed three or four litres of wine and cut up more than half of a leg of mutton, when a great noise of boots was heard. I put out the candle-ends with my slipper and we all hid under the beds.

The door flew open, the chief surgeon appeared and uttered a formidable oath, tripped in the dark, walked out and came back with a lantern accompanied by his inevitable train of attendants. I had taken advantage of the interval to clear away the remains of the feast. The surgeon crossed the dormitory at quick step, swearing and threatening to have us arrested and confined to barracks.

We were indulging in fits of laughter under our bed clothes when a flourish of trumpets resounded at the end of the room. The chief surgeon placed us all on strict diet and left us with a warning that in a few moments we would know what kind of stuff he was made of.

As soon as he was gone we all roared: peals of laughter burst out, hilarious rockets were fired; the bugler turned over on his hands and feet, a friend of his imitating him; a third jumped on his bed like on a spring-board, bounding, rebounding, waving his arms while his night-shirt flew about him. The man next to him was beginning to kick up a

triumphant *cancan*, when all of a sudden the chief surgeon reappeared, ordered four linesmen he had brought with him to collar the dancers and announced that he would make a report, to be sent to the proper authorities.

At last quiet was restored. The next day we induced the assistants to buy us some victuals. Days passed without further incident. We were getting bored to death, when one morning at five o'clock the doctor rushed in and ordered us to don our accoutrements and buckle on our knapsacks.

Ten minutes later we heard that the Prussians were marching on Châlons. Dull stupor fell on the dormitory. Until then we had had no idea of what was going on. We had been apprised of the too celebrated victory at Sarrebrück and were far from expecting such overwhelming reverses. The chief surgeon examined each one of us: none were well, all had been too long saturated with liquorice-water and treated with scant attention. He nevertheless sent the most fit to their respective corps and ordered the remainder to lie down in their clothes with their knapsacks ready.

Francis and I were among the latter. A day went by followed by a night without incident; but I was still suffering severely from my bowels. At last, about 9 a.m. appeared a long line of mule ambulances led by Mobiles. We both climbed into panniers. Francis and I had hoisted each other on the same mule; only as the artist was very stout and I very emaciated, the apparatus gave way: up I went into the air, while he went down under the belly of the beast, which, being pulled along in front and pushed from behind, kicked and plunged furiously. We ran along in a whirlpool of dust, blinded, flurried, tossed about, clinging to the bar of the ambulance, closing our eyes, laughing and moaning by turns. We reached Châlons more dead than alive and fell down on the sand like worn-out cattle. We were then huddled into railway carriages and rolled away from the town, nobody knew whither.

Night had closed: we flew along the rails. The sick left

their seats and stood on the platforms. We heard the engine whistle, the train slackened its speed and came to a stop at a station, Rheims station, I suppose, but I could not swear to it. We were dying of hunger: the commissariat had only forgotten one thing, which was to provide us with loaves for the journey. I alighted, and finding a refreshment-room open I ran in. Others had got there first: they were already fighting together on my arrival. Some seized bottles, others viands, bread, cigars. The owner, driven mad, defended his establishment furiously, armed with a jug. Pushed on by their comrades who came on in a crowd, the first line of Mobiles crashed into the counter, which gave way, dragging down in its fall the boss and his waiters. Then began a regular pillage. Nothing escaped; even matches and toothpicks were pinched. Meanwhile a bell rang and the train started. No one had taken any notice. While seated on the line I explained to the artist, whose bronchial tubes gave him trouble, the composition of the various parts of a sonnet; the train backed to pick us up.

We entrained once more and reckoned up the conquered booty. I must say the provisions lacked variety, they all came from a pork-butcher's shop, there was nothing but what such a shop offers: we had six saveloys seasoned with garlic, a scarlet tongue, two large sausages, a grand slice of Bologna sausage, a silver-lined slice of Lyons sausage, of dark red meat interlarded with white fat, four litres of wine, half a bottle of cognac and some candle-ends. The last we fixed in the necks of our water-bottles, which swung, tied by strings to the sides of the carriage. Now and then, when the train crossed the points of a siding with a jump, down came a shower of hot drops which hardened almost immediately, forming broad patches of grease on our clothes, but these had already suffered on many other occasions. We at once began the repast, which was interrupted by the going and coming of Mobiles, who, running all along the

foot-boards of the train, knocked at our windows for something to drink. We sang at the top of our voices, drank and touched glasses; never did sick travellers indulge in such noise and such frolicking on board a train. You would have thought yourself in a rolling Court of Miracles where cripples jumped close-legged, where men whose bowels were burning cooled them with draughts of cognac, and those who had but one eye opened two, where the feverish cut capers and people with sore throats bawled and tippled. It was an unheard-of experience.

The turbulence subsided after a while. I took advantage of this moment of quiet to put my head out of the window. There was not a star to be seen, not the slightest glimpse of the moon; heaven and earth seemed one, and in the intense darkness the lanterns hanging from the sheet-iron signals winked like eyes of different colours. The engine whistled, the funnel smoked and vomited sparks continuously. I closed the window and looked at my companions. Some were snoring, the others, inconvenienced by the jolts, grumbled and swore, turning from side to side, trying to find room to stretch their legs and rest their heads, which every jolt disturbed.

Tired out by the long watching, I began to slumber, when I was roused by the train coming to a standstill. We were in a station, and the station-master's office flared like the fire of a forge in the darkness of the night. One of my legs was benumbed and I was shivering with cold. I got down to warm myself a little. I walked up and down the line and went to see the engine, which they were uncoupling to attach another, and passing by the telegraph office I listened to the ringing and ticking of the apparatus. The clerk had his back turned to me, and as he leaned a little to the right, I could only see, from where I stood, the back of his head and the tip of his nose, which shone red and perspiring, while what remained of his face disappeared in the shadow cast by the shade of a gas-light. I was

ordered back to the carriage, where I found my comrades as I had left them. This time I went off to sleep. How long I slumbered I could not tell. A loud shout awoke me: Paris! Paris! I rushed to the window. In the distance stood out in black on a pale gold streak the chimneys of factories and mills. It was St. Denis. The news spread from carriage to carriage. All stood while the train still hurried on. The Gare du Nord loomed from afar: on arriving there we ran to the exits: some managed to escape, others were stopped by the railway officials and the military. We were pushed into a train which was getting up steam, and God alone knew our destination now.

Again we rolled on for a whole day. I was sick of looking at those long files of houses and trees flying out of sight; moreover, my bowels still caused me pain. Towards four o'clock in the afternoon the train slowed and stopped at a platform where we were received by an old General around whom fluttered a flock of young men in pink képis, red trousers and boots with golden spurs. The general inspected us and divided us into two parties, of which one marched to the Seminary and the others were sent to the hospital. We were told that the town was Arras. Francis and I were in the former party. They hoisted us on carts filled with straw and we reached a large building which seemed sinking and about to fall into the street. We ascended to a room on the second floor containing about thirty beds. Each unbuckled his knapsack, combed his hair and sat down. A doctor entered.

"What's the matter with you?" he said to the first.

"A carbuncle."

"Ah! and you?"

"Dysentery."

"Ah! and you?"

"A bubo."

"I see: you have not been wounded in the war?"

"Not in the least."

"Well, then, you may put your knapsacks on again. The archbishop only gives the seminarists' beds to the wounded."

I put back into my knapsack the odds and ends I had taken out, and we trudged as well as we could to the town hospital. Here there was no more room. In vain did the Sisters try to get the iron bedsteads closer, the wards had their full complement. Impatient of these delays, I laid hold of a mattress, Francis took another and we went to lie down on a large lawn in the garden.

The next morning I had a talk with the director, an affable and charming man. I asked him to permit the artist and myself to go into the town, which request he granted. The door was opened and we were free! At last we could enjoy a good breakfast, eat real meat, drink genuine wine! What a treat! Without dallying we set out for the best hotel in the town. A succulent repast was served. There were flowers on the table, beautiful bouquets of roses and fuschias that bloomed in high glass vases! The waiter brought us a rib of beef exuding its juice into a lake of butter. The sun joined in the festivity, making the silver and knives shine, sifting its golden rays through the decanters and caressing the Pommard which at every movement swayed gently to and fro in the glasses, colouring with a ruddy spot the damask table-cloth.

O heavenly joy of a copious meal! My mouth was full for once and Francis was tipsy! The flavour of the roast meat mixed with the perfume of the flowers, the purple wine tried to outshine the blushing roses, the waiter looked like a real idiot and we like gormandizers; but little did we care, we crammed roast upon roast, and gulped draughts of claret, burgundy, chartreuse and cognac. Away with the bad wines and atrocious spirits we had ingurgitated since we had left Paris! The devil take those unnamable drinks, those unheard-of dishes with which we had filled ourselves

for nearly a month! We were now unrecognizable, our famished faces were all aglow, we brawled defiantly as we staggered through the town.

When evening came, we had perforce to go back to the hospital. The Sister in charge of the old people's ward said to us in her gentle, flute-like voice:

"Gentlemen, you were very cold last night, now you are going to have a warm bed."

She led us to a large ward where three night-lights threw their miserable rays on the ceiling. My bed had white sheets. It was a delight to plunge into linen fresh from the wash. Soon nothing was heard but breathing and snoring. I felt too hot; my eyes closed; I had lost all sense of my whereabouts, when a prolonged clucking sound roused me. I opened one eye and perceived at the foot of my bed an individual who was staring at me. I sat up in bed and saw before me a tall and lean old man with hollow eyes, from whose lips dribble fell upon an unkempt beard. I inquired what he wanted, and receiving no reply I cried out: "Go away! let me sleep!"

He threatened me with his fist. Suspecting him to be out of his mind, I rolled up a towel, one end of which I furtively knotted. He advanced a step, I jumped out of bed, parried the blow aimed at me, answering it with a swing of the towel that struck his left eye. Although stunned, he made a dash for me: I retreated after landing him a vigorous kick in the stomach. Down he fell, pulling over a chair, which rebounded. The noise awoke the whole dormitory. Francis in his night-shirt hurried to my assistance, the Sister appeared, the attendants rushed at the madman, gave him a beating, and with much trouble got him into bed.

The dormitory offered a fantastic sight: the vague rosy glimmer shed around by the dying night-lights had been succeeded by the bright flashes of three lanterns; the dark ceiling, lighted only by round spots that danced above the

burning wicks, now shone bright, as if it had just been whitewashed. The inmates, old fogies whose ages were a mystery, had laid hold of the wooden bars hanging by a rope above their beds and clung to them with one hand, while with the other they made fearful gestures. At this sight my anger relaxed, I burst out laughing, the artist nearly choked. The Sister alone kept a serious countenance and succeeded by threats and entreaties in re-establishing order. We got through the night as well as we could, and in the morning at six o'clock the rolling of a drum brought us together and the director of the hospital called the roll. We were off to Rouen.

On our arrival there, an officer told the poor fellow who showed us the way that the hospital was absolutely full; so we had to wait an hour at the station. I threw my knapsack into a corner, and in spite of the grumbling of my inside, Francis and I roamed about without any direct purpose in view. But into what an ecstasy we fell when we beheld the church of St. Ouen! How we enjoyed the romantic old houses! We were so lost in admiration that we only thought of returning to the station long after the hour of departure had struck. "Your comrades have left long ago," said a railway official, "they are at Evreux!"

"The deuce! The first train will only be in at nine o'clock. Meantime let us dine!"

When we arrived at Evreux the night had closed in. It was too late to ask for admission at the hospital, they would have taken us for evil-doers. The night being fine we walked across the town and soon found ourselves in the open country. It was hay-making time: the ground was covered with bundles of hay On seeing a small haystack we made ourselves two comfortable niches, and I cannot tell whether owing to the overpowering smell of our beds or to the penetrating fragrance of the woods, we felt it a necessity to go over our past love affairs, an inexhaustible subject! Little by little, however, the conversation slackened,

enthusiasm cooled down and we fell asleep. "Good heavens!" cried my pal, stretching his limbs, "what time may it be?" His exclamation woke me. The sun was on the point of rising, the great blue curtain was already fringed with red on the horizon. Oh, misery! we would ere long have to knock at the hospital door and sleep in wards impregnated by the morbid odour of iodoform powder, that smells like an acrid flower never to be got rid of.

We sadly wended our way there. At the door, alas! Francis alone was admitted and I was dispatched to the lycée. Life was no longer to be endured, and I was meditating my escape, when one day the house-physician on duty came into the yard. I showed him my card of admission to the Law School. He knew Paris and the Latin Quarter. I explained the situation. "It is absolutely necessary," said I, "that Francis should come to the lycée or that I should join him at the hospital." He thought it over, and coming to my bed in the evening, he whispered these words: "Tell them to-morrow morning that you are worse." The doctor appeared the next day at about seven o'clock. He was a kindly, excellent man with only two faults: his breath was not rosy and he always wanted to get rid of his patients at any cost. The following scene was witnessed every day:

"Ah! ah! the sly fellow," he cried, "how well he looks! good complexion, no fever; leave your bed and get a good cup of coffee; but no nonsense, if you please, no running after petticoats; I am going to sign your discharge papers; to-morrow you will join your regiment." He used to send away three every day whether they were ill or not. On that morning he stopped at me and said:

"Good gracious, how much better you look, my boy!"

"I have never suffered so much," I exclaimed.—After tapping all over my stomach, he muttered: "But you are better; it is less hard." I protested. As he appeared

astonished, the house-doctor whispered to him: "We ought perhaps to clear his bowels, but we have no instruments here; suppose we sent him to the hospital."

"Ah! that's an idea," said the good man, enchanted to get rid of me, and there and then he signed my card of transfer. Beaming with joy, I buckled my knapsack, and I was taken to the hospital by a lycée assistant. Again with Francis! By rare good luck there was a vacant bed next to his in the corridor of St. Vincent where he slept, the wards being quite full. We were at last together! Besides our two beds five palliasses were aligned along the ochre-washed walls. They were occupied by a linesman, two artillery-men, a dragoon and a hussar. The rest of the inmates comprised a few cranky and whining old men, a few young ones, affected with rickets or crooked-legged, and a large number of soldiers who, like wreckage from Mac-Mahon's army, after having rolled from one dressing station to another, had been left stranded in this place. Only Francis and I wore the uniform of Mobiles of the Seine. Our neighbours were not bad sorts, but each proved more insignificant than the other. They were mostly sons of peasants or farmers who had rejoined their regiments when war was declared.

While I was doffing my tunic, a Sister came towards me, looking so delicate, so pretty, that I could not keep my eyes off her. She had beautiful large eyes fringed with long fair lashes and what pretty teeth! She asked me why I had left the lycée. I explained as diplomatically as I could that they had sent me away because they had no forcing pump. She smiled gently and said: "Oh! sir, you might have called the instrument by its name, we are used to everything."

She must indeed have been used to everything, yet I never saw her blush; she passed among them without saying a word, looking down, pretending not to hear the vulgar jokes made by those around her.

How she spoilt me! I can still see her in the morning, while the sun dispelled the shadow of the window bars on the flagstones, advancing slowly towards me from the end of the corridor, the flappers of her coif flying about her face. She came to my bed with a steaming soup-plate, on the edge of which shone her well-shaped nail. "As the soup is rather thin this morning," she would say with her pretty smile, "I have brought you some chocolate instead; take it quickly while it is warm."

In spite of all her kindness I was bored to death. My friend and I sank to such a low state of spirits that we remained in bed to drowse away, like beasts, the long, unbearable hours. Our sole distractions were a lunch and dinner consisting of boiled beef, water-melon, prunes and a drop of wine, all in insufficient quantity to satisfy a man's appetite.

Owing to my simple politeness towards the Sisters and to my writing pharmaceutical labels for them, I had the good fortune to obtain a cutlet from time to time, and a pear from the hospital orchard. I was therefore, on the whole, the least to be pitied of all the soldiers who crowded the wards. Yet I could not, during the first days, swallow my morning pittance, for it was visiting time and the doctor had chosen that moment for his operations. The second day after my arrival he slit open a thigh from top to bottom. I heard a heart-rending cry and closed my eyes; but I had seen a rain of red drops splash over his apron; no eating after that! Little by little, however, I became used to such scenes; I just turned my head away and protected my soup from accident. Meanwhile the situation became intolerable. Having tried in vain to obtain newspapers and books, we amused ourselves by putting on the hussar's jacket for fun; but this childish gaiety only lasted for a little, and we lay down again every twenty minutes, and after exchanging a few words buried our heads in our pillows. Conversation was impossible with our comrades. The two artillery-men

and the hussar were too ill to talk; the dragoon swore without speaking, got up at every moment, wrapped in his large white cloak, and went to the lavatory, from which he brought back the smell of the malodorous liquid in which his bare feet had stood. The hospital lacked certain night vessels: some of the worst patients had, however, under their beds an old saucepan which the convalescents tossed like cooks, offering the contents to the Sisters as a joke.

There only remained the linesman, an unfortunate grocer's assistant who was father of a boy. He had been recalled to his regiment, was a constant prey to fever, and shivered under his bed-clothes.

Squatting tailor fashion on our beds, we listened to his account of the battle he had taken part in.

He had happened to be near Froeschwiller, on a plain surrounded by woods, and had seen red flashes through bursts of white smoke; he had kept his head down, trembling, terrified by the cannonade and the whistling bullets. He had trudged among the regiments over clayey ground without espying a single Prussian, not knowing where he was, hearing, close to him, groans interrupted by short cries. The ranks in front of him had suddenly turned back and in the bustle of the flight he had been thrown down, he knew not how. He had got up and taken to his heels, abandoning his gun and knapsack. At last, exhausted by a week's forced marches, worn out by terror and weakened by hunger, he had sat down in a ditch. There he had remained stupefied, without movement, deafened by the crashing of the shells, determined not to defend himself any longer nor budge an inch. Then he had thought of his wife; and asking himself with tears why he had been made to suffer this agony, he had unconsciously picked up a leaf which he had kept, which he prized, for he often pulled it out of some pocket, dried and shrivelled, to show us. An officer had come by, revolver in hand, calling him a coward and threatening to blow out his brains if he did not march

on. "I prefer that," he had replied, "let that be the end!" But the officer, while shaking him to get him on his legs, had toppled over and blood had trickled down his nape. Then, seized again by fear, he had taken to flight and succeeded in reaching a distant road crowded with fugitives, black with troops, furrowed by teams whose terrified horses broke the ranks in their fall.

At last they had found shelter. From groups arose the cry of treason. Veteran soldiers still made a show of resolution, but the recruits refused to continue the fight. "Let them go and be killed," they said, "that's their job!—I have children, the State won't feed them when I am dead." And they envied the fate of those who were slightly wounded and who could find refuge in the dressing stations. "How frightened one is! How long one keeps hearing the voices of those who call for their mothers and beg for a drink!" he added, shuddering. He remained silent a while, and looking at the corridor with rapture, he continued: "All the same, I am glad to be here, for now my wife can write to me," and from his pocket he pulled out letters, saying with pleasure: "The little fellow has written, look," and he showed us at the foot of a page, under the laborious scrawl of his wife, strokes forming a dictated sentence which contained several times, amid blots of ink, the words "I kiss daddy."

We heard this yarn at least twenty times and for mortal hours we had to endure the tiresome twaddle of this poor fellow who was so delighted to have a son. At length we stopped our ears and tried to go to sleep so as not to hear him any longer.

This deplorable situation threatened to go on indefinitely, when one morning Francis, who contrary to his habit had roamed about the yard the whole day before, said to me: "Hullo, Eugène, will you come and have a breath of country air?" I pricked up my ears. "There is a yard," he went on, "reserved for the mad; it is not in use at present;

by climbing on the roof of the padded cells, which is easy to do, thanks to the window gratings, we can reach the top of the wall: a jump, and we are in the country. The wall is close to one of the gates of Evreux. What do you say?"

"I say . . . I say that I am quite ready for an outing, but how shall we get back?"

"That I don't know: let us be off and think it over later on. Get up, they will soon bring the soup; immediately after we shall scale the wall."

I left my bed. As water was scarce at the hospital, I had to wash myself with Seltzer which the Sister had obtained for me. I aimed with the siphon at the artist, who cried: "Fire!" The lever was depressed and the water squirted into his face. Then I stood and received in turn the spurt upon my beard. I rubbed my nose with the froth and wiped myself dry. As soon as ready we went down to the deserted yard and climbed the wall. Francis took sufficient start and jumped. I was astride on the top. I looked around: below was a grassy ditch, to the right one of the gates of the town; in the distance the frizzly outline of a forest stood out against a pale blue streak. I stood up, and hearing some noise in the yard, I jumped. Then gliding along the wall, we entered Evreux.

"Suppose we have something to eat?"

"Right you are."

On the way in search of a lodging, we perceived two young women skimming along: we followed them and offered them a *déjeuner*. They refused, we insisted; then they declined our invitation less decidedly. We insisted again and they accepted. We brought a meat pie, various bottles, eggs and a cold chicken to their lodgings. How extraordinary it appeared to us to be in a bright room having a wall-paper of lilac flowers and green leaves, and window curtains of light green damask! The mantelpiece was adorned with a mirror, an engraving representing Christ pestered by Pharisees; there were six chairs of wild

cherry wood; a round table covered with oil-cloth on which were painted the kings of France; over the bed was spread an eiderdown of pink cambric muslin. We put up the table and looked greedily at the girls bustling around it. It took a long time to lay the table, as we kissed them each time they passed. They were ugly and stupid, but what did that matter? We had not tasted women's lips for such a time!

I cut up the chicken and bottles were uncorked; we drank like choristers and guzzled like ogres. Coffee steamed in the cups and was gilded with cognac. Away flew my sadness! The punch was set fire to: the blue flames of the kirsch fluttered in the crackling salad-bowl; the girls became merry; their dishevelled hair flew about their eyes; their charms became irresistible. Suddenly four strokes resounded slowly from the church bell; it was four o'clock. Good heavens! we had forgotten the hospital. I turned pale; Francis looked at me with dismay; we tore ourselves from our hostesses' arms and hurried out.

"How shall we get in?" said the artist.

"Alas! we have no choice, we shall barely arrive in time for the soup. Let's chance it and slip in by the front door!"

We rang the bell: the Sister who attended the door opened it and stood aghast. We saluted her and I said, loud enough for her to hear:

"I say, do you know that the commissariat officials are not too amiable? The stout one in particular received us with scant politeness."

The Sister made no remark. We galloped up to the dormitory; it was high time, I could hear the voice of Sister Angèle distributing the rations. I hastened to my bed, taking care to cover with my hand a bruise which the damsel had left on my neck. The Sister looked at me, found my eyes inordinately excited and said with concern:

"Do you feel worse?"

I reassured her, replying: "On the contrary, I feel

better, Sister, but this idleness and imprisonment are killing me."

Whenever I complained to her of the dreadful lassitude I experienced feeling alone among such company, in the remotest corner of a province, far from my own people, she made no reply, but tightened her lips, her eyes expressing indefinable melancholy and pity. And yet one day she had said to me dryly: "No! liberty would not be a good thing for you," alluding to a conversation she had overheard between Francis and me, in which we discussed the gay charms of Parisian ladies. Then in gentler tone she had added, pouting in her charming little way:

"You are really not serious enough, my dear soldier."

Next morning the painter and I agreed that after swallowing our soup we would again scale the wall. At the hour decided upon we prowled around the yard: the door was shut. "So much the worse!" exclaimed Francis, "on we go!" and he made for the chief entrance. I followed him. The nun in charge of the door asked where we were going. —"To the commissariat." She opened the door and we were free.

On reaching the market-place in front of the church, I noticed, while we examined the sculptures of the porch, a stout gentleman whose round, red face bristled with a white moustache; he looked at us with astonishment. We stared at him unblushingly and went our way. As Francis was dying with thirst, we entered a café, and while sipping a half-glass, I perused a local paper and came across a name that set me musing. I was not, to say the truth, acquainted with the person that bore it, but this name reawoke remembrances that had slumbered a long time. A friend of mine had a relative of high station who lived at Evreux. "I must pay him a visit," I said to the artist. I asked the café keeper for his address: he did not know it. I inquired at all the bakers' and chemists' shops I passed. As everybody eats bread and takes potions, thought I, it is impossible

that one of these should not know the address of M. de Fréchède. This surmise proved correct. After brushing my tunic, I bought a black tie and some gloves and made for the Rue Chartraine. I rang gently at the gate of a mansion which reared its brick façades and its slate roofs in the midst of a sunny park. A valet showed me in. M. de Fréchède was absent, but Madame was at home. I had waited a few moments in a drawing-room, when a door-curtain was lifted and an elderly lady appeared. Re-assured by her very affable look, I explained in a few words who I was.

"Sir," she said with a kindly smile, "I have heard a good deal about your family; I even believe I have seen your mother at Madame Lezant's the last time I went to Paris. You are welcome."

We had a long talk, I, not quite at ease, hiding with my képi the mark on my neck, she trying to make me accept money, which I refused.

"Come," she said at last, "I wish with all my heart to be useful to you. What can I do?"

"Ah! madame," I replied, "if you could obtain from the authorities permission for my return to Paris, you would render me a great service. According to the papers, communications are soon to be cut, and they foresee a new coup d'état or the fall of the Empire. I wish very much to join my mother and above all not to remain here as a prisoner in case the Prussians come."

Thereupon M. de Fréchède entered the room. In a few words he was informed of the situation.

"If you wish to come with me to the hospital doctor," he said, "we have no time to lose."

To the doctor! Good heavens! Could I explain to him how I had left the place? I dared not utter a word and followed my protector, asking myself how it would all end. The doctor looked at me with astonishment. Leaving him no time to open his mouth, I treated him, with marvellous

volubility, to a long jeremiad concerning my sad predicament.

M. de Fréchède spoke in his turn and asked him to grant me a two months' convalescent leave.

"The gentleman is evidently quite ill enough," said the doctor, "to claim two months of rest; if my colleagues and the General accept my view, your protégé will be allowed to return to Paris in a few days."

"Excellent!" replied M. de Fréchède, "I thank you, doctor; this evening I shall speak to the General."

Once in the street, I heaved a heavy sigh of relief, I grasped the hand of the excellent man who deigned to take an interest in me, and I ran to seek Francis. We had just time enough to get back. Francis rang at the hospital gate; I saluted the Sister. "Did you not tell me this morning," she interrupted, "that you were going to the commissariat?

"Certainly, my Sister."

"Well, the General has just left. Go to the director and Sister Angèle, who are waiting for you; you will no doubt explain to them the object of your visits to the commissariat."

Quite out of countenance, we walked up the dormitory stairs. Sister Angèle, who was waiting for me, exclaimed:

"I would never have believed it! You have been running about the whole town yesterday and to-day, and God knows what sort of life you have led!"

"How can you say such things!" I rejoined.

She looked at me so fixedly that I was struck dumb.

"It's true all the same," she continued; "the General met you to-day on the market-place. I declared you had not been out and searched for you all over the hospital. The General was right: you were out. He asked for your names: I only gave him one and refused to tell the other. This was a mistake on my part, for you do not deserve it."

"Oh! Sister, how grateful I am!" . . . But Sister Angèle was not listening, she was indignant at my conduct!

There was nothing else for me to do but to remain silent and to bear the storm without seeking shelter. Meanwhile Francis was summoned to the director's room, and as, for some reason or other, they suspected him of corrupting me, and in consequence of his unseemly jokes he was not in the good graces of either doctor or Sisters, he was told to join his corps the next day.

"The hussies with whom we lunched yesterday are simply authorized prostitutes who have sold us," Francis affirmed in a fury: "the doctor told me so himself."

While we cursed these wenches and deplored that our uniforms should have betrayed us so easily, the rumour spread that the Emperor had been made a prisoner and that the Republic had been proclaimed at Paris. I gave a franc to an old inmate who had leave to go out, asking him to get me a number of the *Gaulois*. The news was true: the hospital rejoiced. "Badinguet was done for and not too soon! At last the war is at an end!" we cried.

Next morning Francis and I embraced, and as he went off, he shouted: "Au revoir! Get you to Paris!" and shut the gate. Oh! what days succeeded, what sufferings and despair! I could not leave the hospital, as a sentry marched up and down before the entrance in my honour. I had, however, the courage not to give way to sleep and walked about the yard like a beast in a cage. I roamed thus for twelve hours. I had studied every corner of my prison, I knew where wall plants and mosses abounded, where the wall was cracked and creviced. I was disgusted with the corridor, with my bed that was as flat as a pancake, with the obstinate whiner, and with my linen rotting from dirt. I lived apart, not speaking to a soul, kicking about the stones in the yard, wandering like a tormented spirit under the arcades washed with ochre, the same as the walls of the wards, returning to the entrance gate surmounted by a flag, ascending to the first floor and my bed, going down to the kitchen where the utensils shone, the red copper sauce-

pans darting rays in the dim light. Impatience made me champ the bit as I witnessed at certain hours civilians and soldiers going and coming, passing and repassing on every floor, crowding the galleries as they crawled along.

I had not even strength enough to elude the Sisters, who were bent on beating us up for chapel on Sundays. I was becoming a monomaniac, obsessed as I was by the idea of escaping as soon as possible from this lamentable gaol. My mother had sent me a hundred francs to Dunkerque, where she imagined me to be. This money was not forwarded, and I saw the moment when I would not have a sou to buy tobacco or paper. Day after day the de Fréchèdes seemed to have forgotten me, and I attributed their silence to my escapades, which no doubt they had heard of. These agonies of mind were accompanied by horrible physical pain. My bowels, unattended to and irritated during my escapades, were burning. I suffered to such a degree that I feared I should not be able to stand the fatigues of the journey. Yet I dissembled my sufferings for fear that the doctor might detain me by force. I kept to my bed several days; then, feeling that my strength was giving way, I determined to get up and went down into the yard.

Sister Angèle never spoke to me, and in the evening, as she made her round in the corridors and dormitories, looking aside so as not to notice the pipes gleaming in the dark, she passed before me, indifferent and cold, turning away her eyes.

A certain morning, however, as I was dragging myself about the yard, letting myself sink on every bench, she noticed that I was so changed and pale, and she could not restrain a feeling of compassion.

In the evening, after she had been round the dormitories, I was leaning on my bolster, gazing at the bluish beams which the moon shed through the corridor-windows, when the door at the further end of the ward opened again and I perceived Sister Angèle coming towards me, and as she

passed before the windows or the walls she appeared bathed in a silvery mist, or as a dark figure in black crape. "To-morrow morning," she said with a gentle smile, "you are to be examined by the doctors. I have seen Madame de Fréchède to-day and you will probably start for Paris in two or three days." I jumped up in my bed, my face brightened. I could have leaped about and sung, never had I been so happy. Next morning after dressing, not without some anxiety, I betook myself to the room where a number of officers and doctors were in council. One by one soldiers exhibited their hairy, bullet-scarred torsos. The General was filing one of his nails; the Colonel of gendarmes was fanning himself with a sheet of paper, the practitioners chatted while their fingers pressed the patients' bodies. My turn came at last: I was examined from head to foot; they felt my stomach which was swollen and inflated like a balloon, and the council unanimously granted me sixty days' convalescent leave. At last I was to see my mother again and find myself among my knick-knacks and books! A red-hot iron no longer burned my bowels, and I skipped about like a kid!

I advised my family of the good news. My mother wrote letter on letter wondering why I did not come. Alas! my papers had to be endorsed at the Rouen division. I received them five days later and now all was in order. I went to beg Sister Angèle to obtain for me, before the time fixed for my departure, a permit to go and thank the de Fréchèdes who had been so kind to me. She brought me the permit granted by the director. I hurried to the house of those good people. They obliged me to accept a silk handkerchief and fifty francs for my travelling expenses. At the commissariat I was provided with a travelling permit. At the hospital I had but a few minutes to dispose of, and tried to find Sister Angèle; she was in the garden. I said to her with much emotion: "Dear Sister, I am off! How shall I ever be able to show you my gratitude?" I

seized her hand, which she wanted to draw back, and lifted it to my lips: she blushed. "Adieu," she murmured, and with threatening finger she added gaily: "Be a good boy, and especially avoid bad company on the journey."

"Oh! fear nothing of the sort, Sister, I promise to do my best!" At the appointed hour the entrance gate was opened, I rushed to the station and jumped into a carriage: the train started and I had left Evreux. The compartment was only half full and I took possession of a corner seat. Looking out of the window I saw a few pollarded trees and low hills winding in the distance; a bridge crossed a large pool that sparkled in the sun like a pane of glass; it was no joyous scene. I sunk back in my corner, casting now and again a look at the telegraph wires that ruled the background with dark lines. The train stopped. The travellers who were around me alighted, the door was closed and then reopened and a young woman entered the compartment.

While she sat down and uncrumpled her dress, I caught a glimpse of her face, thanks to the fluttering of her veil. She was charming, her eyes full of a heavenly blue, her lips tinged with carmine, her teeth white, her hair the colour of ripe maize. I started on a conversation: her name was Reine and she embroidered flowers; we chatted like old friends. She suddenly became pale and seemed about to swoon. I opened the ventilators and handed her a smelling-bottle I had brought from Paris in case of need; she thanked me, saying it was nothing and leaned on my knapsack to try to sleep. Happily we were alone; but the wooden barrier that divided the carriage into two compartments was only waist high and one could hear the shouts and loud laughter of country men and women. I could have beaten these fools who disturbed her sleep. I had to be content with listening to the silly political views they exchanged, and I soon had enough. I stopped my ears and tried to go to sleep; but the words uttered by the station-master at the last stoppage, "You will not get as far as

Paris, the line has been cut at Mantes," constantly disturbed my slumber, like the repeated burden of a song. I opened my eyes; my companion awoke; I kept my fears to myself. We talked in whispers: she told me she would meet her brother at Sèvres. "But," said I, "the train will not enter Paris before 11 p.m. You will never have time to reach the departure platform on the left bank of the Seine."

"What shall I do," she replied, "if my brother is not there to meet me?"

Oh, misery! I was as grimy as could be, my stomach was all afire! I could not think of taking her to a bachelor's lodgings, and besides I wished first to run to my mother's. How to manage? I looked anxiously at Reine and took her hand. At this moment the train changed to another line; the jolt threw her forward, bringing our lips together; I quickly impressed mine on hers and she turned crimson. Good heavens! her mouth moved imperceptibly and she returned my kiss; a long thrill ran along my back; at the contact of these glowing lips I felt ready to faint. Ah! Sister Angèle, Sister Angèle, a man cannot change his nature!

The train roared and rolled on at full speed, we were flying towards Mantes. Contrary to my apprehension the line was free. Reine half closed her eyes, her head dropped on my shoulder; her little curls mixed with my beard and tickled my lips; I supported her supple waist and rocked her to and fro. We were nearing Paris: we passed docks and warehouses, circular workshops where, in a glowing mist, engines roared, getting up steam. The train stopped, tickets were collected. After mature reflection I made up my mind first to take Reine to my bachelor lodgings, hoping that her brother would not be awaiting her arrival! We alighted: her brother was there.

"We shall meet in five days," she said, sending me a kiss, and the pretty bird flew off.

Five days after I was in bed terribly ill and the Prussians

occupied Sèvres. I never saw her again. I heaved a heavy sigh, although it was no time for being sad.

Driven in a jolting cab, I recognized my quarter, arrived at my mother's house. I galloped up the stairs and rang hurriedly. The maid opened the door. "What! Monsieur!" she exclaimed, and ran to tell my mother, who rushed to meet me, turned pale, embraced me, examined me from head to foot, stepped back, looked at me and again hugged me.

Meanwhile the maid had emptied the sideboard. "You must be hungry, Monsieur Eugène," she said.—"I am indeed!" I replied. I devoured everything they gave me and gulped large glasses of wine; to speak the truth, I did not know what I ate or drank. I returned to my lodgings for the night. I found my apartments just as I had left them, and went over them beaming with joy; then I sat down on the settee, where I remained in ecstasies, in raptures, gorging my eyes with the sight of my knick-knacks and books. After that I undressed and enjoyed a thorough washing, realizing that for the first time for months I would have a clean bed and clean feet and nails. I jumped into my billowing couch and buried my head in the feathery pillow; I closed my eyes and was soon sailing at full speed o'er the sea of dreams.

Methought I saw Francis lighting his large wooden pipe, Sister Angèle looking at me with her gentle pout, and Reine coming towards me. At this I started up, called myself a fool and sunk again into the pillow. But my abdominal pains which had ceased for a while made themselves felt as soon as my nerves grew quiet. I rubbed my stomach gently, happy at being released from the horrible predicament of those suffering from dysentery. I was at home, I could be sure of privacy, and I reflected that one must have lived in the promiscuity of hospitals and camps to appreciate the value of a basin of water, and to delight in the comfort of being able to look after oneself without being the target of every eye.

GUY DE MAUPASSANT

(1850–1893)

(I)

THE OLIVE-YARD

(Translated by John Gilmer)

I

When the loafers of the little Provençal harbour of Garandou, on the Bay of Pisca, between Marseilles and Toulon, caught sight of the Abbé Vilbois' boat coming in from fishing, they went down to the beach to help him to get it in.

The Abbé was alone, and he was rowing like a real sailor, with uncommon energy in spite of his fifty-eight years. With sleeves rolled up over his muscular arms, his cassock pulled up between his knees and unbuttoned across his chest, his shovel-hat beside him and a pith helmet covered with white cloth on his head, he seemed like a sturdy, rather odd-looking priest from the tropics, more ready for exciting deeds than for saying Mass.

Occasionally he looked over his shoulder to find the exact landing-place, then pulled rhythmically and hard, to show, and not for the first time, those poor sailors of the south how men from the north can row.

The boat sped forward lightly over the sand, as if it were going to climb to the very top of the beach, then stopped dead, burying its keel in the shingle, and the five men who had been watching came to its side, pleasant fellows all, cheery, and on the best of terms with their curé.

" Well, Monsieur le Curé," said one of them, with a strong Provençal accent, " had good luck? "

The Abbé Vilbois shipped his oars, exchanged his pith helmet for his priest's hat, rolled down his sleeves, buttoned up his cassock, and, once more in garb and bearing the curé of the village, replied proudly:

" Yes, indeed, very good: three cat-fish, two congers, and some rock-fish."

The five fishermen examined the catch as experts—the fat cat-fish, the flat-headed congers, ugly sea-serpents, and the rock-fish with their violet zigzag stripes and orange bands.

One of them said: " I will carry them up to the house, Monsieur le Curé."

" Thanks, my good man."

Shaking hands all round, the priest started off, followed by one of the men and leaving the others to look after his boat. Strong, and with the dignity of his high position, he walked slowly but steadily on. Still warm after his vigorous row, he took off his hat as he passed under the olive trees, to expose to the night air, with its warmth tempered by a sea-breeze, his big head, covered with white hair cut straight and short, more the head of an officer than of a priest. The village was on a little hill in the middle of a broad valley which ran down to the sea.

It was an evening in July. The dazzling sun, which was just touching the jagged peaks of distant hills, made longer and yet longer the shadow of the priest on the road in its shroud of dust, while his enormous hat, making a broad, dark blot upon the field beside him, seemed, as it were, to climb quickly up the olives, only to fall as quickly to earth and to creep among the trunks of the trees.

There rose from under the Abbé Vilbois' feet a cloud of fine dust, that thin flour with which roads in Provence are covered in summer, and it curled, like grey smoke, round his cassock, the bottom of which it covered as with a veil. Cooler now, with his hands in his pockets, he went

steadily forward, like a mountaineer making a stiff ascent. With calm eyes he looked towards the village, that village in which he had been curé for twenty years, the village which he had chosen and which had been given to him as a great favour, and in which he hoped to die. The church, his church, raised itself high above the mass of houses in a cluster round its walls, with its two uneven square towers of brown stone, whose outlines had been seen for years untold in this beautiful southern valley, more like the strong towers of a castle than the steeples of a church.

The Abbé was feeling pleased with himself, for he had caught three cat-fish, two congers, and some rock-fish. He would have yet another little victory over his parishioners, he whom they respected, most of all, perhaps, because, in spite of his age, he was the strongest man in the district. Such innocent little vanities were his chief pleasure. He was such a good shot with a pistol that he could pick off the stalk of a flower; he sometimes fenced with his neighbour, the tobacconist, once the fencing-master of a regiment; and he rowed better than anyone on that coast.

In years gone by, the Baron Vilbois had been well known in the fashionable world, turning priest after an unfortunate love-affair.

Scion of an old family of Picardy, which was Royalist and pious, and which for centuries had given its sons to the Army, the Law, or the Church, he had at one time the intention of becoming a priest, on the advice of his mother, but, his father objecting, he decided to go to Paris, study law, and then look out for some good post at the courts. As he was finishing his studies, his father died of pneumonia, caught while shooting on the marshes, and his mother, overwhelmed with grief, died shortly afterwards. So, having thus come into a considerable fortune, he gave up his idea of following a profession, and was content to live the life of a man of means.

Handsome, intelligent, though his outlook on life was

prejudiced by the beliefs, the traditions, and the principles which, as well as his native strength, he inherited, he was a favourite everywhere, popular in the more intellectual circles of society, and enjoying life as a wealthy, austere, and well-liked young man generally does.

After some meetings at a friend's house, he fell in love with a young actress, a young student of the Conservatoire, who made a brilliant *début* at the Odéon.

He fell in love with all the violence, all the passion of a man born to believe in absolutism. He fell in love with her as he saw her in the romantic part in which she won great success on her first appearance in public.

She was pretty, by nature perverse, with the look of an unspoilt child which he used to call her angel-look. She was clever enough to conquer him completely, turning him into one of those love-stricken fools whom a woman's look or petticoat burns on the pyre of deadly passions. So he took her for his mistress, made her leave the stage, and loved her for four years with ever-increasing passion. Indeed, in spite of his name and the great traditions of his family he would have married her, had he not discovered one day that she was deceiving him with the friend who had introduced her to him. The horror of the shock was the greater because she was *enceinte*, and he was awaiting the birth of the child to decide on marrying her.

When he obtained all the proofs of her infidelity, letters which he came across in a drawer, he raged at her for her treachery and low deceit with all the ferocity of the half-savage that he was.

But she, the gutter-snipe, impudent and shameless, sure of the other man as she was of him, bold, too, as the women who stand atop the barricades out of pure devilry, defied and insulted him, and, as he raised his hand, pointed to her condition.

He stopped and turned pale, imagining that a child of his was in that defiled flesh, in that vile body, in that unclean

beast—a child of his! Then he threw himself upon her to crush them both, to annihilate the double shame. She was frightened, giving herself up for lost, and as she recoiled from his fist and saw his foot ready to destroy herself and the child unborn, she cried out:

"Don't kill me: it is not yours, it is his!"

He started back, dumbfounded and bewildered, and stammered:

"What are you saying?"

She, suddenly mad with fear of the death which she saw in this man's eyes and gestures, repeated:

"It is not yours; it is his."

He, completely prostrated, murmured through his teeth:

"The child?"

"Yes."

"You lie!"

And again he made to crush her, while she, on her knees, and trying to get away from him, went on babbling:

"But I tell you it is his: if it were yours, would not I have had it long ago?"

This argument convinced him. In one of those flashes of thought, when all arguments are seen with brilliant clearness, concise, unanswerable, conclusive, irresistible, he was convinced. He was absolutely sure that he was not the father of that wretched unborn child, and, relieved, freed, of a sudden almost pacified, he gave up the idea of killing its detestable mother.

He said, more gently: "Get up, go away, never let me see you again."

She obeyed, crushed, and went away.

He never saw her again.

He, too, went away down south, to the sun, and halted at a village in the middle of a valley on the Mediterranean. He took a room in an inn looking out on the sea, and remained there for eighteen months of grief and despair, away

from everybody. Ever before him were the memories of the woman who had betrayed him, her charm, her surroundings, her inexpressible witchery, and longing for her presence and her kisses.

He wandered through the valleys of Provence, seeking to forget his sorrow in the sun which was softened by the grey leaves of the olive trees.

Here, in the solitude of pain, the old piety, the more reasonable fervour of his early faith came back to him gently and mercifully. The religion which had formerly seemed to him a refuge from the unknown world, now seemed a haven of rest from the world of treachery and torture. He had never lost the habit of prayer. To prayer, then, he devoted himself in his trouble, often going at dusk to kneel in the darkened church, where a solitary light, holy guardian of the sanctuary and symbol of the Divine Presence, was shining.

He laid his sorrows before this God, his God, craving for advice, pity, help, protection, consolation, and every day his prayers became more and more fervent. His bleeding heart, consumed by love of a woman, was bare and throbbing, eager for tenderness. Little by little, through prayer and the solitary life, with ever-increasing piety, and by giving himself up entirely to that secret communion of the devout with the Saviour who consoles and draws the unhappy unto Him, he found the Divine Love and drove the other from him.

Then he went back to the plans of his youth and decided to offer to the Church a broken life which should have been hers in its early vigour.

He became a priest. Through family influence he was appointed curé of the Provençal village to which chance had directed him, and having handed over a large part of his fortune to charity, only keeping sufficient to enable him to be of use and of help to the poor, he retired from the world to a life of piety and of devotion to his fellow-creatures.

He was a priest of strict views, but kindly, a sort of religious guide with the temperament of a soldier, a guide who led, with forcibleness, on the right road poor humanity, blind, straying, lost in this forest of life, in which all our instincts, our tastes, our desires, are as a maze of paths. But much of the man of old days remained alive within him. He was still fond of vigorous exercise, of sport, of fencing, and he hated women, all of them, with the fear of a child before some mysterious danger.

II

The sailor who was following the priest had a desire, natural enough in one of the south, for a talk, but he hardly dared take the risk, for the Abbé was a somewhat stern shepherd to his flock. At last he ventured:

"You are comfortable in your house, Monsieur le Curé?"

This house was one of those tiny houses in which the Provençals of the towns and villages rest and enjoy fresh air in summer. The Abbé had taken this cottage in the middle of an olive-yard, five minutes' walk from his presbytery, which was too small, adjoining the church and in the very middle of his parish. Even in summer he did not always live in it; he only went there for a few days occasionally to live in the open and practise with his pistol.

"Yes, my friend," replied the priest, "I am very happy there."

They saw the low dwelling among the trees before them. Painted pink, with the swaying branches and leaves of the olive trees giving effects of stripes and spots, it had the appearance of some gigantic Provençal mushroom.

They saw, too, a tall woman walking backwards and forwards, getting the little dinner-table set, putting down, in her own slow way, one after the other, a fork and spoon, a plate, a napkin, a piece of bread, a glass. She wore the little bonnet of the people of Arles, a pointed cone of black silk or velvet with a white mushroom as ornament.

When the Abbé was within calling distance, he hailed her:

"Marguerite!"

She stopped to look round, and, recognizing her master, replied:

"Ah, it's you, Monsieur le Curé!"

"Yes, and I am bringing you a good catch. Grill me a cat-fish with butter, nothing but butter, you understand?"

The servant, coming to meet them, examined with the eye of an expert the fish which the sailor was carrying.

"We have already got a fowl cooked with rice," she said.

"That can't be helped. To-morrow's fish is not so good as one just out of the sea. For once in a way I am going to indulge myself in a really fine feed: the sin is not great."

The servant chose the fish and, as she was taking it away, turned to say:

"Ah! a man has come three times to see you, Monsieur le Curé."

He asked, quite unconcernedly:

"A man? What sort of man?"

"The sort of man whom one doesn't want to see."

"What! A beggar?"

"Perhaps, perhaps not. I should rather think he was a *maoufatan*."

The Abbé burst out laughing at that Provençal word, which means scallywag, or tramp, for he knew how nervous Marguerite was, and that she was always imagining, especially at night, that they would both be murdered in the cottage.

He gave the sailor a few coppers and sent him off. Then, as he still kept his old habit of cleanliness and neatness, he said:

"I am going to wash my hands and face."

Marguerite called out to him from the kitchen where she was scraping the fish, whose scales were coming off like tiny pieces of silver:

"Why! There he is!"

The Abbé looked out on the road and saw a man, who, at that distance, seemed very badly dressed, and who was coming slowly towards the house. He awaited him, still smiling at his servant's fright, and thinking: "Upon my word, I believe she is right. He certainly has the look of a *maoufatan*."

Without hurrying, his hands in his pockets, his eyes on the priest, the unknown fellow drew near. He was young, with a fair, curly beard, and bunches of his curly hair escaped from under his soft felt hat, a hat which was so dirty and so battered that nobody could ever have guessed its original colour and shape. He had on a long, faded brown great-coat, a ragged pair of trousers, and straw shoes, which gave him a soft, silent, disquieting walk—the walk of a tramp.

A few yards from the priest, he took off his ragged hat with a theatrical flourish, baring a withered, spotted, but well-formed head, bald on the top, a sure sign of weariness or youthful excess, for he certainly was not more than twenty-five.

The priest immediately took off his hat, too, guessing and feeling that this was no ordinary vagabond, an out-of-work, or an habitual criminal who hardly knows any language but the mysterious talk of prisons.

"Good day, Monsieur le Curé," said the man.

The priest replied, simply: "Good day," not wishing to call this suspicious-looking, ragged wayfarer "sir."

They looked hard at each other, and, facing the gaze of this tramp, the Abbé felt uneasy, troubled as if he were facing an unknown enemy, beset by one of those curious sensations which make the body shiver and the blood run cold.

At last the vagabond said: "Well, do you recognize me?"

Very much astonished, the priest replied: "I? Not at all. I don't know you."

"Ah! You don't know me. Look at me again."

"I have had a good look at you. I have never seen you before."

"That's true enough," replied the fellow sarcastically, "but I am now going to show you somebody whom you know better."

He put on his hat and unbuttoned his coat, showing his bare chest underneath it. A red belt round his thin stomach held up his trousers.

From his pocket he took an envelope, one of those impossible envelopes which every sort of stain has marked, one of those envelopes in which wandering, broken men, keep hidden away in the lining of their clothes, the odd papers, legitimate or forged, stolen or their own lawful property, which are their trusty safeguard against casual police-officers. From the envelope he took a photograph, the cabinet size of those days, all yellow and faded after its many wanderings, and stained by the heat of his body.

Holding it up next to his face, he asked: "Do you know this one, then?"

The priest stammered: "Yes!"

"Who is it?"

"Myself."

"You are sure?"

"Yes."

"Well, look at us both, now, your portrait and me."

The wretched old man had already seen that the two, the man of the photograph and the one laughing beside it, were as alike as two brothers, but he did not yet understand, and he stammered:

"What do you want from me, then?"

In a nasty tone, the ruffian replied: "What do I want? Well, first of all, I want you to recognize me."

"Who are you?"

"What am I? Ask the first you meet; ask your servant; let us go and ask your mayor, if you like, and show him

this photograph, and I bet you he will laugh. Ah! you don't want to recognize me as your son, papa curé?"

Then the old man, raising his arms with a biblical and despairing gesture, groaned:

"That is not true."

The young man came closer to him.

"Ah! it is not true. Abbé, you must stop telling lies, do you hear?"

His looks were threatening and his fists were clenched, and he spoke with such rough conviction that the priest, moving back a few steps, began to ask himself which of them was wrong.

Once more, however, he insisted: "I have never had a child."

The other retorted: "And no mistress, perhaps?"

The old man uttered firmly only one word, a proud assent: "Yes."

"And was not this mistress with child when you drove her out of your house?"

Suddenly the old wrath, stifled twenty-five years ago—not stifled, but walled up deep down in the heart of the lover—broke through the walls of pious devotion and self-renunciation which he had raised round it, and, in wild fury he shouted:

"I drove her out because she was false to me and because she was with child by another. But for that, I would have killed her and you, sir, too!"

The young man hesitated, surprised in his turn by the sincerity of the curé's fury, and replied in a more gentle tone:

"Who told you that the child was another's?"

"She, herself, as she faced me."

Then the vagabond, without arguing this statement, said, as casually as a gutter-snipe pronouncing judgment:

"Well, all that need be said is, that mamma was wrong when she defied you."

Master of himself once more, after his outburst, the Abbé asked:

"Who told you that you were my son?"

"She did, on her death-bed, Monsieur le Curé, and then this!" And he held up the little photograph.

The old man took it, and slowly and quietly, his heart full of sorrow, compared this unknown passer-by with the old picture of himself, and he no longer doubted that this outcast was his son.

Distress, unutterable emotion, appalling pain, like remorse for some bygone crime, filled his heart. He understood a little, he guessed the rest; he recalled the brutal scene of their parting. It was to save her life, threatened by him whom she had wronged, that the woman, the deceitful, faithless creature, had hurled that lie at him. And the lie had been successful. A son of his had been born, had grown up, had become this dirty tramp, stinking of vice as some filthy goat.

He whispered: "Will you come for a little walk, to talk matters over?"

The other chuckled unpleasantly: "Of course; that is what I have come for."

They went off together, side by side, through the olive-yard. The sun had gone down, and the cool of a southern twilight spread its invisible cloak over the country-side. The Abbé shivered, and raising his eyes in the usual priest-like manner, he saw all around him, shaking against the sky, the little greyish leaves of the holy tree which had sheltered under its slight shade the greatest pain of all—the one and only weakness of Christ.

A short and despairing prayer rose to his lips, a prayer made by that inner voice which does not utter it, the prayer of the believer calling on his Saviour: "O God, help me!"

Then, turning to his son: "So your mother is dead?"

A fresh grief passed through him and tore his heart, as he said the words, "Your mother is dead." It was a

strange torment of the flesh of the man unable to forget, a cruel echo of the torture he had suffered. But even more bitter, perhaps, because she was dead, was the thrill of the memory of that delirious and brief happiness of his youth, of which nothing now remained but a scar.

The young man replied: "Yes, Monsieur le Curé, my mother is dead."

"Long ago?"

"Three years ago."

A fresh doubt crossed the priest's mind.

"Why, then, did you not come sooner to find me?"

The other hesitated before replying: "I could not. There were obstacles. For the moment, excuse me if I ask you to let me stop this confidential talk, which can be resumed by and by, when I will give you as many details as you please, for I must tell you I have had nothing to eat since yesterday morning."

A wave of pity swept over the old man, and, quickly holding out his hands, he said:

"Oh! my poor child!"

The other took the two big hands which closed over his thinner, clammy, and feverish fingers. Then he replied with his usual humbugging air:

"Well, well, I am beginning to believe that we shall understand each other after all."

The curé started walking again.

"Let us go in to dinner," he said.

Suddenly, with a little feeling of natural joy, curious and not unmixed, perhaps, he thought of the fine fish, which, with the chicken and rice, would make a good meal that day for this wretched creature.

The Arlesian servant, uneasy and already inclined to grumble, was waiting for them.

"Marguerite," cried the Abbé, "carry the table inside, and as quickly as you can, and set it for two. Hurry up, I tell you!"

The servant stood still, amazed that her master was going to dine with this villainous-looking fellow.

Then the Abbé himself set to work to carry the things set out for him into the only room on the ground floor.

Five minutes later he was seated opposite the vagabond before a tureen of cabbage soup which sent up between their faces a little cloud of steam.

III

When the plates were filled, the tramp hastened to swallow his soup greedily.

The Abbé was no longer hungry, and only drank the soup slowly, leaving the bread at the bottom of his plate. Then suddenly he asked:

"What is your name?"

The fellow laughed, pleased to be satisfying his hunger.

"Unknown father, no other surname but my mother's, which probably you have not forgotten yet. On the other hand, I have two Christian names which certainly don't suit me: Philippe Auguste."

The Abbé grew pale and in a half-choked voice asked:

"Why did they give you those names?"

The vagabond shrugged his shoulders.

"You ought to be able to guess. After leaving you, mamma wanted to make your rival believe that I was his son, and he did believe it till I was nearly fifteen, when I began to grow too like you. Then he repudiated me, the skunk. They had given me his two Christian names, Philippe Auguste, and if I had had the luck to be like nobody in particular, or to be merely the son of some third bad-lot, I should be calling myself to-day the Viscount Philippe Auguste da Pravallon, tardily-recognized son of the Count of the same name, Senator. As it is, I christened myself 'No luck'!"

"How do you know all that?"

"Because there were scenes and explanations before me—and jolly rough ones, I can tell you! Ah! that's what life teaches you!"

The priest was oppressed by a feeling even more painful and torturing than he had suffered in the last half-hour. He felt a sort of strangling, which was beginning, which would increase, and which would finish by killing him. This feeling was the result, not so much of what he was hearing, as of the way in which it was being said, and the vile face of the blackguard who was emphasizing it all. Between this man and himself, between his son and himself, he was beginning just now to see that open sewer of moral filth which for certain minds is deadly poison. That was his son? He could not yet believe it. He wanted all the proofs, every bit of them. He wanted to learn all, understand all, hear all, suffer all. He thought once more of the olive trees surrounding his little house, and for the second time he murmured:

"O God, help me!"

Philippe Auguste had finished his soup. He asked:

"Nothing more to eat, Abbé?"

As the kitchen was in an annex outside the house, and Marguerite could not hear the curé when he called to her, he used to do so by striking a Chinese gong hung behind him near the wall.

He took up the leather gong-stick and struck the round metal plaque several times. A faint sound, which grew and grew, vibrating, sharp, piercing, horrible, came from it, as the wail of beaten copper.

The servant came in. Her face was drawn with anger and she looked furiously at the *maoufatan* as if, with her instinct of a faithful dog, she had a foreboding of the tragedy hanging over her master. She was carrying the grilled cat-fish, from which there arose the savoury smell of melted butter.

The Abbé split the fish with a spoon, and as he gave the

choicest portion to the child of his youth, said with a remnant of pride conquering his trouble:

"I myself caught him a little while ago!"

Marguerite remained in the room.

The priest turned to her.

"Bring some wine, good wine, the white wine of Cape Corsica."

She looked as if she would almost refuse, and he had to repeat, a little sternly: "Come along! Two bottles." For when he had the rare pleasure of offering wine to anybody, he used to have a bottle too.

Philippe Auguste, delighted, muttered: "Capital! A fine idea! I haven't had such a good feed for a long time."

The servant returned in a couple of minutes. The Abbé considered them as long as two eternities, for a desire to know all was scorching his blood and devouring him as with the fires of hell.

The corks of the bottles were drawn, but the servant remained in the room, staring at the young man.

"Leave us," said the curé.

She pretended not to hear.

He repeated, almost roughly: "I have told you to leave us alone."

Then she went out.

Philippe Auguste was eating the fish, quickly and greedily, and his father was looking at him, more and more surprised and distressed at the evil which he saw in a face so like his own. The little pieces that the Abbé put in his mouth remained in it, his choking throat refusing to let them pass, and he went on chewing them, seeking in his mind the question to which, among them all, he most desired the reply.

At last he said: "What did she die of?"

"Lungs."

"Was she ill long?"

"About eighteen months."

"How did it begin?"

"No one knows."

They stopped talking. The Abbé went on thinking. So many things which he wanted to know were troubling him, for since their rupture, since the day he nearly killed her, he had heard nothing of her. True, he had had no desire to hear, for he had buried her in oblivion, her and his happy days. Now, however, that she was dead, he began to feel growing within him a desire to get news of her, an envious desire, almost the desire of a lover.

He went on: "She was not alone, was she?"

"No. She was always living with him."

The old man shuddered.

"With him! With Pravallon?"

"Of course."

The man who had been betrayed in days gone by calculated that this very woman who had sold him had lived for more than thirty years with his rival. Almost in spite of himself, he stammered:

"Were they happy together?"

The young man replied with a sneer: "Certainly—with ups and downs. But for me, it would have been all right. I always spoilt everything—I did."

"How, and why?" asked the priest.

"I have already told you. Because, until I was about fifteen, he always believed I was his son. But the old chap was no fool, and he found out the likeness all on his own, and then there were scenes. I was listening outside the door. He accused mamma of taking him in. Mamma retorted: 'Is it my fault? You knew quite well when you took me on that I was the other man's mistress.' The other man was you."

"So they talked of me sometimes?"

"Yes, but never before me till the end, the very end, in those last days when mamma felt her end approaching. They did not trust me."

"And you? Did you soon gather that your mother was not straight?"

"Of course. I am not a fool, you know, and I never have been one. One gets a notion of such things as soon as one knows something of life."

Philippe Auguste began to pour out glass after glass for himself. His eyes sparkled, his long fast hurrying on his intoxication.

The priest saw it. He nearly stopped him, but it struck him that intoxication made men foolish and talkative, so he filled up the young fellow's glass again.

Marguerite brought in the chicken with rice. Having put it on the table, she again stared at the tramp. Then she said, somewhat shocked:

"Look how drunk he is, Monsieur le Curé."

"Leave us alone and go away," answered the priest.

She went out, slamming the door.

He asked: "What used your mother to say about me?"

"Why, the usual thing a woman says about the man she has left: you were not easy to get on with, tiresome for a woman to live with, and with your fine ideas you would have made things difficult."

"Did she say that often?"

"Yes; sometimes in a roundabout way, so that I should not understand. But I could always guess her meaning."

"And how did they treat you in your home?"

"Me? Very well at first, and then very badly. When mamma saw that I was spoiling her game, she chucked me out."

"How?"

"How? Why, when I was about sixteen I kicked over the traces, and then the idiots sent me to a reformatory, to get rid of me."

He put his elbows on the table, his cheeks between his hands, and quite drunk, his mind fuddled by the wine, he

was suddenly seized by one of those irresistible desires to talk about himself, which make drunkards in their cups drivel and romance. He smiled pleasantly with woman-like grace, that perverse grace which the priest recognized. And not only did he recognize it, but once more he felt that grace, so detestable and yet so caressing, which had conquered and destroyed him in bygone days. At the moment the young man was most like his mother, not in face, but in the ensnaring and treacherous look, and especially in the seduction of that tricky smile, which seemed to reveal all the baseness within.

Philippe Auguste told his story:

"Ha! ha! I have had a deuce of a life, I have, since I left the reformatory, a queer life for which a great novelist would pay well. Certainly, old Dumas, with his Monte Cristo, never invented queerer adventures than mine."

He stopped for a moment, turning things over in his mind with the philosophical seriousness of one who is drunk, and then went on:

"When you want a boy to turn out well, you should never send him to a reformatory, whatever he may have done, because of the acquaintances he will make there. I had a jolly idea, but it turned out badly. One evening as I was fooling around with three pals, all of us a little drunk—it was about nine o'clock—on the high-road near the ford over the Folac, I came on a carriage in which everybody was asleep, the driver and his family, folk from Martinon who had been out to dinner. I caught hold of the horse by the bridle, got it and the trap on to the ferry-boat, and shoved off the whole thing into mid-stream. That made some noise, and the chap who was driving woke up, and, not seeing anything, whipped up his horse. The horse gave a start and jumped into the river, dragging the trap after it. They were all drowned! My pals gave me away, though they had laughed all right when they saw me playing the fool. True, we never thought our fun would end so

badly. We were only hoping to give the people a bath, which would have been funny enough.

"Since then, I have done nastier things, out of revenge for that little one, which, 'pon my soul, did not deserve punishment. But I won't bother you by telling you of them. I am only going to tell you the last, because I am sure it will please you. I have avenged you, papa."

The Abbé, who was eating nothing, looked at his son, terrified.

Philippe Auguste was going to talk again.

"No," said the priest, "by and by, not now."

Turning round, he struck the strident Chinese gong.

Marguerite came in at once, and her master said, so roughly that she hung her head, frightened and obedient:

"Bring in the lamp and anything you have still to put on the table. After that, don't come back until you hear the gong."

She went out and returned to place on the table a white china lamp with a green shade, a good piece of cheese and some fruit. Then she left the room.

"Now," said the Abbé firmly, "I am listening."

Philippe Auguste quietly filled his plate with dessert and his glass with wine; the second bottle was almost empty though the curé had not touched it.

The young man, stammering, his tongue clogged with too much food and drink, continued his story:

"Now I am going to tell you the last of my escapades, and rather a brutal one it is. I had got home again, and I was staying there in spite of their objections, for they were afraid of me—would you believe it?—of me. Oh! you must not annoy me. Oh no! I am ready to do anything when I am annoyed. You know, they were living together, and yet not together. He had two separate establishments, one the senator's, the other the lover's. But he was living with mamma more often than alone, for he couldn't do without her very long. Ah! mamma was jolly clever and

strong of will; she knew how to keep a man, she did! She had got him, body and soul, and she kept him till the end. What idiots men are! Well, I had come back, and I was terrorizing them. I am an artful dodger, I am, when I have to be, and I can beat anybody if it comes to spite, or cuteness, or a row. Then mamma fell ill and he settled her in a fine house near Meulan, in the middle of a park as big as a forest. That, as I have already told you, went on for about eighteen months. Then we felt the end approaching; he came from Paris every day and was really very much distressed.

"Well, one morning they had been jawing together for nearly an hour, and I was beginning to ask myself what it was all about, when they called me into the room, and mamma said: 'I am near death, and there is something I want to disclose to you, in spite of the Count's opinion.' She always called him 'the Count' when she spoke of him. 'It is the name of your father, who is still alive.'

"I had asked her for it more than a hundred times . . . more than a hundred times . . . my father's name . . . more than a hundred times . . . and she had always refused to tell it me. I even think that one day I knocked her about, to get it out of her, but it was no use. Then, to get rid of me, she told me you were dead without a sixpence, that you never had been of any use, a mistake of her youth, a girl's slip, and so forth and so on. She told the yarn so well that I swallowed it whole, your death included. Now she said: 'I am going to tell you your father's name.' The other, who was seated in an armchair, said three times, just like this: 'You are making a mistake, Rosette, you are making a mistake, you are making a mistake.'

"Mamma raised herself in her bed. I see her still with her red cheeks and shining eyes, for, in spite of everything, she loved me. She said to him: 'Then do something for him, Philippe!' When talking to him, she used to call him 'Philippe' and me 'Auguste.'

"He started shouting like a madman: 'For that blackguard, never, for that scamp, for that convict, for that——' and he called me names as if he had been doing nothing else but look for them all his life.

"I was beginning to lose my temper, but mamma told me to hold my tongue, and said to him: 'You want him to die of hunger, then, as I have no money?' He answered quite unconcernedly: 'Rosette, for thirty years I have given you thirty-five thousand francs a year; that comes to more than a million francs. Thanks to me, you have had the life of a woman who is rich, loved, and, if I may say so, happy. I owe nothing to this blackguard who has spoiled our last years, and he will get nothing from me. There is no good insisting. Tell him the name of the other man, if you like. I am sorry, but I wash my hands of the affair.'

"Then mamma turned to me. I said to myself: 'Good. I am going to get my own father back. If he has any money, I am saved!'

"She went on: 'Your father, the Baron de Vilbois, is known nowadays as the Abbé Vilbois; he is curé of Garandou, near Toulon. He was my lover when I left him for this man.'

"Then she told me everything, except how she humbugged you about her pregnancy. But, you know, women never tell the truth."

He grinned unconcernedly, showing freely all his beastliness. He went on drinking, and, still laughing, continued:

"Mamma died two days later. We followed her coffin to the grave, he and I—rather funny, eh? he and I—and three servants; that was all. He cried like a cow. We were side by side, and we might have been put down as papa and papa's son. Then we went back to the house—only we two. I said to myself: 'Got to get out without a halfpenny'—I had just fifty francs. What could I do to get even with the fellow? He touched my arm, saying,

'I have something to talk to you about.' I followed him into his study. He sat down at his table, and then, weeping dismally, he told me he would not be as nasty to me as he had told mamma he would. He begged me not to worry you—but that's our affair, yours and mine. He offered me a thousand-franc note—a thousand, what on earth could I do with a thousand francs—me, a chap like me! I saw he had lots more in the drawer, a great heap of them. The sight of all those notes made me want to go for him. I held out my hand to take the note he was offering me, but, instead of taking his dole, I sprang upon him, threw him down, and squeezed his throat until his eyes bulged out. Then, when I saw he was nearly dead, I gagged him, tied him up, undressed him, turned him over, and then, ha, ha! I avenged you in the funniest way."

Philippe Auguste coughed, choking with delight, and, once more, on those lips, smiling but savage, the Abbé saw the old smile of the woman who had made him lose his head.

"Then?" he said.

"Then, ha, ha! There was a big fire in the grate, it was December; mamma died from the cold. There was a big coal fire. I took up the poker, made it red hot, and then I made crosses on his back, eight or ten, I don't know how many, and then I turned him over and made as many on his belly. He wriggled like an eel, but I had gagged him well, so he couldn't squeal. Then I took the notes, a dozen of them, with my own that made thirteen—that didn't bring me luck—and I bolted after telling the servants not to disturb the Count till dinner-time, as he was asleep.

"I thought he would keep the thing quiet, for fear of a scandal, considering that he was a senator, but I was wrong; for, days after, I was arrested in a restaurant in Paris, and I got three years. That's why I could not come to look you up sooner."

He still went on drinking, and gabbling so that he could hardly speak clearly.

"Now, papa—papa curé—how funny it is to have a curé for a papa! Ha, ha! Papa must be very, very nice to his little boy, because his little boy is not an ordinary one, and he did score off the old chap jolly well, didn't he?"

The same rage which once had maddened the Abbé in the presence of the mistress who had sold him now filled him in the face of this horrible fellow. He, who in the name of God had so often forgiven inexpressible horrors whispered in the secrecy of the confessional, felt without pity, without mercy, as an individual, and he did not call out to his helpful and merciful God for help, for he knew that no divine or earthly help can save those on whom such misfortunes fall.

All the fire of his passionate heart and impetuous nature, kept in check by his priestly office, awoke in an irresistible outburst against this wretch who was his son, against this likeness to himself, and against the mother, the worthless mother, who had conceived him in her own likeness, and against the fate which had riveted this blackguard to his foot like the chains of a galley-slave.

He saw, he foresaw everything with sudden clearness, awakened, as he was, by this shock from his twenty-five years of peace and piety.

Convinced at once that he had to take a strong line in order to frighten this scoundrel and to get in the first blow, he said, his teeth clenched in his fury, and with no further thought of the fellow's drunkenness:

"Now that you have told me everything, listen. You will go away to-morrow morning. You will live in a district which I will name to you, and which you will never leave without my permission. I will make you an allowance there, which will be enough for you to live on, but it will only be a small one, for I have no money. If you disobey

me one single time, the arrangement will cease, and you will come up against me."

Although fuddled by the wine, Philippe Auguste understood the threat, and the criminal in him suddenly rose. Hiccoughing, he spat out:

"Oh, papa, don't try that on with me. You're a curé, and I've got you, and you'll go quietly like the others."

The Abbé started, and felt an irresistible longing to seize this monster in his brawny arms, bend him like a cane, and show him that he had to give in.

Shaking the table and pushing it against him, he shouted:

"Take care, take care! I am afraid of nobody!"

The drunkard, losing his balance, reeled in his chair. Feeling that he was about to fall and that he was in the priest's power, he stretched out his hand with the glare of a murderer to one of the knives on the table. The Abbé saw the act and gave the table such a push that his son fell backwards and lay prone upon the floor. The lamp rolled off the table and went out.

For a few seconds there was a little jingling of broken glass in the darkness. There followed a sound, as it were, of a soft body crawling over the stone floor. After that, nothing.

With the lamp broken, darkness came down upon them so suddenly and unexpectedly that they were horrified by it as by some fearful thing. The drunkard, cowering by the wall, did not move again. The priest remained in his chair, his anger quenched by the darkness. That black veil, holding back his rage, disarmed, too, the impetuous fury in his soul, into which other ideas, black and sorrowful as the darkness itself, entered.

There was a silence, a silence as profound as that of a tomb, in which nothing seemed to breathe or live any longer. No sound was heard from without, of a carriage in the distance, or the barking of a dog, or even the whispering of wind among the leaves up against the house.

The silence lasted a long time, a very long time, perhaps an hour. Then, suddenly, the gong rang out. Struck by a single hard and strong blow, it rang, and there followed a queer noise of a fall and of an overturned chair.

Marguerite, on the watch, rushed in, but as soon as she opened the door she recoiled, frightened by the impenetrable darkness. Trembling, her heart beating violently, almost breathless, she called out:

"Monsieur le Curé, Monsieur le Curé!"

No one answered. Nothing stirred.

"My God, my God," she said to herself, "what have they done? what has happened?" She dared not go in; she dared not return with a light. A mad desire to run away, to scream, seized her, although she felt her legs trembling so much that she nearly collapsed. She repeated: "Monsieur le Curé, Monsieur le Curé, it's me, Marguerite."

Suddenly, in spite of her fear, an instinctive desire to help her master, and one of those fits of bravery which, on occasion, make heroines of women, filled her soul with terrified daring, and running to the kitchen she fetched her lamp.

She stopped on the threshold of the room. She saw, first of all, the vagabond, who was lying along the wall, asleep or apparently asleep, then the broken lamp, then under the table, the two black feet and black-stockinged legs of the Abbé, who must have fallen over on his back, striking the gong with his head as he fell.

Shaking with fright, her hands trembling, she repeated:

"My God, my God, what has happened?"

As she stepped forward slowly, with little steps, she slipped on something greasy and nearly fell. Bending down, she saw on the red floor a red liquid trickling round her feet in the direction of the door. She knew it was blood.

Wild with terror, she ran out of the room, extinguishing her lamp so as not to see more. She rushed outside to the village, knocking against the trees as she ran, her eyes fixed

on the lights in the distance, screaming as she ran. Her shrill voice was borne on the night as the fateful scream of the owl, and ever she went on crying:

"The *maoufatan*, the *maoufatan*, the *maoufatan!*"

When she came to the first of the houses, scared men rushed out and surrounded her, but she struggled with them, without answering their questions, for she had completely lost her head.

At last they understood that an accident had happened at the curé's house, and some of them picked up weapons and went off to help him.

The little rose-coloured house in the middle of the olive-yard was now invisible and black in the deep, silent night. Ever since the only light in its window had gone out, as an eye that closes, it remained drowned in the shadows, lost in the darkness, undiscoverable by any who did not know the district.

Soon lights approached quickly through the trees. They threw long yellow rays on the burnt grass, and under their wandering beams the twisted trunks of the olive trees seemed like hideous monsters, hellish serpents, all twisting and entangled together. The beams thrown forward suddenly made something white and indefinable rise out of the darkness. Then the low, square wall of the little house turned pink in the light of the lanterns. Some peasants were carrying them, escorting two gendarmes with revolvers, the village policeman, the mayor, and Marguerite, whom some of them were supporting, as she had nearly collapsed.

They hesitated before the door, still open and rather awesome. Then the chief gendarme seized a light and went in, followed by the others.

The servant had not lied. Blood, now congealed, covered the floor as with a carpet. It had trickled as far as the vagabond, soaking one of his legs and one of his hands.

Father and son were sleeping, the one, his throat cut,

the eternal sleep, the other the sleep of the drunkard. The gendarmes threw themselves upon him, and, before he was awake, had him handcuffed. He rubbed his eyes, stupefied, fuddled by the wine, and when he saw the dead body of the priest, he seemed terrified and unable to understand the meaning of it all.

"Why didn't he bolt?" said the mayor.

"Too drunk," answered the officer.

And everybody agreed, for it never occurred to them that, perhaps, the Abbé Vilbois might have put an end to himself.

(II)

THE NECKLACE

(Translated by George Burnham Ives)

She was one of those pretty, charming girls who, as if by a mistake of destiny, are born into a family of government clerks. She had no dowry, no expectations, no means of being known, appreciated, loved, and married, by any man of wealth and distinction; and she submitted to be married to an under-clerk at the Department of Public Instruction.

She dressed simply, being unable to adorn herself, but she was as unhappy as a woman who has married below her station; for women have neither caste nor race, their beauty, their grace, and their charms taking the place with them of noble birth and family. Their innate refinement, their instinctive breeding, their mental adaptability are their only hierarchy, and make a girl of the common people the equal of the greatest of *grandes dames*.

She suffered constantly, feeling that she was born to enjoy all the refinements and luxuries of life. She suffered because of the poverty of her home, the bareness of the walls, the dilapidated state of the chairs, the hideousness of the

materials. All these things, which another woman of her caste would not even have noticed, tortured and angered her. The sight of the little Breton maid who took care of her humble establishment aroused in her mind despairing regrets and wild dreams. She dreamed of silent antechambers, hung with Oriental fabrics, lighted by tall bronze candelabra, and with two tall valets in knee-breeches dozing in spacious arm-chairs, made drowsy by the heavy heat from the stove. She dreamed of long salons furnished in old silk, with slender furniture bearing priceless trifles; and of dainty little perfumed boudoirs, made for five-o'clock chats with one's closest friends, with well-known and much-sought-after men whose attentions all women envy and desire.

When she sat down to dine at the round table covered with a cloth that had been used three days, opposite her husband, who, as he removed the lid of the soup-tureen, exclaimed with an enchanted air: "Ah! a good old stew! I know of nothing better than that!" she dreamed of dainty dinners, of gleaming silverware, of tapestries peopling the walls with antique personages and strange birds in the midst of an enchanted forest; she dreamed of exquisite dishes served on splendid plate, of gallantries whispered and listened to with a sphinx-like smile, while you are eating the pink flesh of a trout or the wing of a chicken.

She had no fine dresses, no jewels, nothing. And she cared for nothing else; she felt that she was made for those things. She would so have liked to be attractive, to be fascinating, to be envied and sought after.

She had a wealthy friend, a former schoolmate at the convent, whom she would not go to see, she suffered so on returning home. And she wept whole days with disappointment, regret, distress, and despair.

One evening her husband came home with the air of a conqueror, holding a big envelope in his hand.

"Here is something for you," he said.

She hastily tore the envelope, and took out a printed card on which were these words:

"The Minister of Public Instruction and Mme. Georges Ramponneau invite M. and Mme. Loisel to pass the evening at the Ministerial Palace on Monday, January 18th."

Instead of being overjoyed, as her husband hoped, she tossed the invitation angrily on the table, murmuring:

"What do you expect me to do with that?"

"Why, my dear, I thought that you would be pleased. You never go out, and here is an opportunity—a fine one! I had the greatest difficulty in obtaining it. Everybody tries to get them; they are very much sought after, and not many are given to clerks. You will see the whole official world there."

She looked at him with an irritated eye, and demanded impatiently:

"What do you expect me to put on my back to go there?"

He had not thought of that.

"Why," he faltered, "the dress you wear to the theatre. It looks very nice to me——"

He paused, stupefied, beside himself, to see that his wife was weeping. Two great tears were rolling slowly down from the corners of her eyes to the corners of her mouth.

"What's the matter? what's the matter?" he stammered.

But by a violent effort she had conquered her weakness, and she answered calmly, wiping her wet cheeks:

"Nothing; only I have no dress, and so I can't go to this ball. Give your card to some colleague whose wife is better equipped than I."

He was in despair.

"Let us see, Mathilde," he replied. "How much will it cost, a suitable dress that you can wear again on other occasions; something very simple?"

She reflected a few seconds, making her calculations and also thinking how large a sum she could ask for without

bringing forth an instant refusal and a horrified exclamation from the economical clerk.

At last she replied, hesitatingly:

"I don't know exactly, but it seems to me that I could make out with four hundred francs."

He turned a little pale, for he had set aside just that sum to purchase a rifle and indulge in an occasional hunting excursion, during the summer, on the plain of Nanterre, with some friends who went there on Sundays to shoot larks.

But he said:

"Very good. I will give you four hundred francs. And try to have a pretty dress."

The day of the ball drew near, and Madame Loisel seemed sad, disturbed, anxious. Her dress was ready, however. Her husband said to her one evening:

"What's the matter? Tell me; you have been very queer for three days."

And she replied:

"It annoys me to have not a jewel, not a single stone, nothing to put on. I shall look as poverty-stricken as can be. I should almost prefer not to go to the ball."

"You might wear natural flowers," he rejoined. "They are very stylish at this season. You can get two or three magnificent roses for ten francs."

She was not convinced.

"No, there is nothing more humiliating than to look poor among a lot of rich women."

"How stupid you are!" cried her husband. "Go to your friend Madame Forestier and ask her to lend you some jewels. You are intimate enough with her to do that."

She uttered a cry of joy.

"That's so. I hadn't thought of that."

The next day she went to her friend's house, and told her of her trouble.

Madame Forestier went to a wardrobe with a glass door, took out a large jewel-box, brought it to Madame Loisel, opened it, and said to her:

"Take your choice, my dear."

She saw first of all bracelets, then a pearl necklace, then a Venetian cross in gold and precious stones, a beautiful piece of work. She tried them on before a mirror, hesitated, could not decide to part with them, to replace them. She kept asking:

"You have nothing else?"

"Why, yes. Look. I don't know what may take your fancy."

Suddenly she discovered in a black satin case a superb diamond necklace, and her heart began to beat with an immoderate longing. Her hands trembled as she took it up. She fastened it about her throat, over her high dress, and stood in ecstasy before her own image.

Then she asked, hesitatingly, in an agony of suspense:

"Can you lend me this, just this and nothing else?"

"Why, yes, to be sure."

She sprang upon the neck of her friend, kissed her passionately, then fled with her treasure.

The day of the ball arrived. Madame Loisel had a triumph. She was prettier than any of the others, stylish, gracious, smiling, and mad with joy. All the men stared at her, asked her name, requested to be presented. All the clerks in the Department wanted to waltz with her. The Minister noticed her.

She danced madly, in a frenzy, intoxicated by pleasure, regardless of everything in the triumph of her beauty, in the pride of her success, in a sort of cloud of happiness composed of all that homage, of all that admiration, of all those newly kindled desires, of that complete victory which is so sweet to a woman's heart.

She went away about four in the morning. Her husband

had been asleep since midnight in a little, deserted ante-room, with three other gentlemen whose wives were enjoying themselves hugely.

He threw over her shoulders the wraps he had brought for her to wear home—modest garments of every-day life, whose shabbiness contrasted with the elegance of the ball dress. She felt this and insisted on hastening away, to avoid being noticed by the other women, who were wrapping themselves in rich furs.

Loisel detained her.

"Wait a moment; you'll take cold outside. I will go and call a cab."

She would not listen to him, however, but hurried down the stairs. When they were in the street, they could find no cab; and they set out to look for one, shouting after the drivers whom they saw passing in the distance.

They walked towards the Seine, in dire discomfort, shivering with cold. At last they found on the quay one of those ancient nocturnal coupés which are seen in Paris only after nightfall, as if they were ashamed to show their shabbiness during the day.

It took them to their door on Rue des Martyrs, and they went sadly up to their apartment. It was all over, for her. And he was thinking that he must be at the office at ten o'clock.

She removed the wraps with which her shoulders were covered, standing in front of the mirror, in order to see herself once more in all her glory. But suddenly she gave a shriek. Her diamond necklace was no longer about her neck!

Her husband, already half undressed, asked:

"What's the matter with you?"

She turned to him, half distracted:

"I have—I have—I no longer have Madame Forestier's necklace."

He sprang to his feet in dismay.

"What? What do you say? It's impossible!"

And they hunted in the folds of the dress, in the folds of her cloak, in all the pockets, everywhere. They could not find it.

"Are you sure that you had it when you left the ball?" he asked.

"Yes. I felt it in the vestibule of the palace."

"But, if you had lost it in the street, we should have heard it drop. It must be in the cab."

"Yes, that is probable. Did you take the number?"

"No. Didn't you look at it?"

"No."

They stared at each other in utter dismay. At last Loisel dressed himself.

"I am going to walk back over the whole distance we walked to the cab," he said, "to see if I can't find it."

And he left the room. She sat there in her ball dress, without strength to go to bed, cowering in a chair, without fire, without a thought.

Her husband returned about seven o'clock. He had found nothing.

He went to the Prefecture of Police, to the newspaper offices, to offer a reward; to the cab companies—everywhere, in short, that a ray of hope suggested.

She waited all day, in the same state of benumbed dismay in face of this terrible disaster.

Loisel returned at night, pale and hollow-cheeked; he had discovered nothing.

"You must write to your friend," he said, "that you have broken the fastening of her necklace, and that you are having it repaired. That will give us time to turn round."

She wrote at his dictation.

At the end of a week they had lost all hope; and Loisel, who had aged five years, declared:

"We must think about replacing the jewels."

The next day they took the box that had held it and went to the jeweller whose name was inside. He consulted his books.

"It was not I who sold the necklace, madame," he said; "I simply furnished the case."

Then they went from one jeweller to another, looking for a necklace like the lost one, searching their memories, both fairly ill with disappointment and mental anguish.

In a shop at the Palais Royal they found a string of diamonds which seemed to them to be absolutely like the one they had lost. It was worth forty thousand francs, but they could have it for thirty-six thousand.

They requested the jeweller not to sell it for three days. And they bargained with him—that he should take it back for thirty-four thousand francs if the other should be found before the end of February.

Loisel had eighteen thousand francs left him by his father. He would borrow the rest.

And he borrowed, asking one person for a thousand francs, another for five hundred; five louis here, three louis there. He gave notes, made ruinous agreements, dealt with usurers, with the whole race of money-lenders. He mortgaged the whole latter portion of his life, risked his signature without any certainty that he would be able to honour it; and, dismayed by agonizing thoughts of the future, by the black poverty that was about to fall upon him, by the prospect of all sorts of physical privations and mental torture, he went to buy the new diamond necklace, and laid upon the jeweller's counter thirty-six thousand francs.

When Madame Loisel carried the necklace to Madame Forestier, the latter said to her with an injured air:

"You should have returned it sooner, for I might have needed it."

She did not open the case, as her friend dreaded. If she had discovered the substitution, what would she have

thought, what would she have said? Would she not have taken her for a thief?

Madame Loisel came to know the wretched life of the needy. She made the best of it, however, at the outset, heroically. That dreadful debt must be paid. She would pay it. They dismissed their servant; they changed their lodgings, and hired an attic chamber under the eaves.

She became acquainted with the heavier kinds of housework, the odious tasks of the kitchen. She washed the dishes, wearing her pink nails away on the greasy earthenware and the bottoms of the saucepans. She washed the soiled linen, the shirts and dish-cloths, and hung them out to dry on a line; she carried the slops down to the street every morning, and carried up the water, stopping on every floor to take breath. And, dressed like a woman of the common people, she went to the fruiterer's, to the grocer's, to the butcher's, with her basket on her arm, bargaining, insulted, doling out her paltry money sou by sou.

Each month they had to meet some notes, renew others, beg for time.

The husband worked evenings straightening out a tradesman's accounts; and he often copied manuscript at night at five sous the page.

And this life lasted ten years.

At the end of that time they had paid everything, everything, the charges of usurers and the accumulation of the compound interest.

Madame Loisel seemed an old woman now. She had become the strong, tough, rugged woman of impoverished households. Always unkempt, with red hands, and skirts askew, she talked loudly while washing the floors with a great splashing. But sometimes, when her husband was at the office, she would seat herself at the window and think of that evening of long ago, of that ball, at which she had been so lovely and so fêted.

What would have happened if she had not lost that

necklace? Who knows? Who knows? What a strange, changeful thing life is! How little is needed to ruin or to save us!

One Sunday, when she had gone out for a walk in the Champs-Élysées, for a little recreation after the labours of the week, she suddenly observed a woman wheeling a child. It was Madame Forestier, still young, still beautiful, still fascinating.

Madame Loisel was greatly excited. Should she speak to her? Yes, to be sure. And now that she had paid, she would tell her the whole story. Why not?

She approached her.

"Good-day, Jeanne."

The other did not recognize her, and was surprised to be addressed thus familiarly by that *bourgeoisie*.

"But—madame," she said hesitatingly, "I don't know—— You must have made a mistake."

"No, I am Mathilde Loisel."

Her friend uttered an exclamation;

"Oh, my poor Mathilde, how you have changed!"

"Yes, I have had some very hard days since I saw you, and much suffering—and all on your account!"

"On my account? How so?"

"You remember that diamond necklace that you lent me to wear to the ball at the ministry?"

"Yes. Well?"

"Well, I lost it."

"How is that, since you brought it back to me?"

"I brought you another just like it. And for ten years now we have been paying for it. You can understand that it wasn't easy for us, having nothing. However, it is done, and I am mightily pleased."

Madame Forestier stopped.

"You say that you bought a diamond necklace to replace mine?"

"Yes. You didn't notice it! Did you? They were very much alike."

And she smiled with a proud and naïve delight.

Madame Forestier, deeply moved, grasped both her hands.

"Oh, my poor Mathilde! Why, my necklace was paste. It was worth at most five hundred francs!"

(III)

SAVED!

(Translated by Reginald Hargreaves)

The little Marquise de Rennedon came rushing in like a ball smashing a window, and she began to laugh before she spoke, to laugh until she cried; as she had done a month previously, when she had told her friend she had betrayed the Marquis in order to have her revenge, but only on the one occasion, because he was really too stupid and too jealous.

The little Baronne de Grangerie had thrown the book she had been reading on to the sofa, and looked at Annette curiously, and was already laughing herself. At last she asked:

"What have you been doing now?"

"Oh! my dear! . . . My dear, it is too funny . . . too funny! Just fancy . . . I am saved! . . . Saved! . . . *Saved!*"

"How do you mean—saved?"

"Yes, saved!"

"From what?"

"From my husband, my dear. Saved! Delivered! Free, free, *free!*"

"How free? In what?"

"In what? Why in divorce. I have my divorce!"

"You are divorced?"

"No, not yet; how stupid you are! One cannot get divorced in three hours! But I have my proofs that he's deceived me. . . . Caught in the very act . . . just think! . . . in the very act. . . . I've got him tight . . . .!"

"Oh! do tell me all about it! . . . So he deceived you?"

"Y-e-es . . . that is to say, no . . . . yes *and* no. Oh! I . . . I don't know. At any rate I have the proofs, and that's the chief thing."

"How did you manage it?"

"How did I manage it? . . . Like this! . . . I have been energetic, very energetic. For the last three months he has been odious, absolutely odious, brutal, coarse, a bully, nothing short of vile. So I said to myself: 'This can't last, I must have a divorce!' But the point was—how? For it isn't easy. I tried to make him beat me, but he wouldn't. He got on my nerves from morning till night, made me go out when I didn't wish to, and remain at home when I wanted to dine out; he made my life unbearable from one week's end to the other, but he never struck me.

"Then I tried to find out if he had a mistress. Well, he had, but he took a thousand precautions in going to see her, and they could never be caught together. . . . Guess what I did then!"

"I could never guess!"

"No, indeed, you could never guess. . . . I asked my brother to get me a photograph of the creature!"

"Of your husband's mistress . . .!"

"It cost Jacques fifteen louis, the price of an evening, from seven o'clock till midnight, and he obtained the photograph into the bargain."

"H'm! It seems to me that he might have got that anyhow by some means or other without . . . without being obliged to take the original at the same time!"

"Oh! she's quite pretty, and Jacques didn't mind in the least. And then I wanted some details about her, physical

details about her figure, her breast, her complexion, a thousand things in fact."

"I don't understand . . ."

"You'll see! When I'd learnt all I wanted to know I went to a . . . how shall I put it? . . . to a man of business . . . you know . . . one of those men who transact business of all sorts . . . agents of publicity . . . and . . . and complicity, one of those men who . . . well, you know what I mean . . .!"

"Pretty nearly, I think. And what did you say to him?"

"I said to him, showing him the photo of Clarice (her name is Clarice): 'M'sieu, I want a lady's-maid who resembles this photograph. I require one who is pretty, elegant, neat and trim. I will pay her whatever is necessary, and if it costs me ten thousand francs, so much the worse. I shall not require her for more than three months.'

"The man looked extremely astonished, and said: 'Do you require a maid of irreproachable character, Madame?'

"I blushed, and stammered, 'Yes, of course, for honesty.' He continued: 'And then . . . as regards to . . . to morals . . .?'

"I did not venture to reply, so I only made a sign with my head which signified *no*. Then suddenly it dawned on me that he had a horrible suspicion, and losing my head I exclaimed: 'Oh! M'sieu . . . it is for my husband, in order that I may surprise him . . .'

"Then the man began to laugh, and from the way he looked at me I gathered that I had regained his good opinion. He even thought I was plucky, and I would have been prepared to bet that at that moment he was longing to shake hands with me. However, he said to me: 'In a week, Madame, I shall have what you require. I will answer for my success, and you shall not pay me until I have succeeded. So this is a photograph of your husband's mistress?'

"'Yes, M'sieu.'

" ' A handsome woman. And what scent? '

" I did not understand, and repeated: ' What scent? '

" He smiled: ' Yes, Madame, the perfume is essential to entice a man, for it unconsciously brings to his mind certain reminiscences which dispose him to action; the perfume creates an obscure confusion in the mind, and disturbs and enervates him by recalling his pleasures to him. You must also try to find out what your husband is in the habit of eating when he dines with this lady, and you might give him the same dishes the day you catch him. Oh! we have got him, Madame, we have got him! '

" I went away delighted, for it seemed that I had struck a very intelligent man!

" Three days later I saw a tall, dark girl arrive at my house; she was very handsome, and her looks were modest and bold at the same time, the peculiar look of the female rake. She behaved very properly towards me, and as I did not know exactly what she was I called her *Mademoiselle*, but she said immediately: ' Oh! please, Madame, only call me Rose.' And then she began to talk.

" ' Well, Rose, you know why you have come here? '

" ' I can guess it, Madame.'

" ' Very good, my girl; and . . . and it will not be . . . not be too much bother for you? '

" Oh! Madame, this will be the eighth divorce I shall have caused; I am used to it.'

" ' Why that is capital; will it take you long to succeed? '

" ' Oh! Madame, that depends entirely on M'sieu's temperament. When I have seen M'sieu alone for five minutes I shall be able to tell you exactly.'

" ' You will see him soon enough, my child; but I must tell you that he is not handsome! '

" ' That doesn't matter to me, Madame, I have already separated some very ugly ones. But I must ask you, Madame, whether you have discovered his favourite perfume? '

" ' Yes, Rose—verbena.'

" ' So much the better, Madame, for I am also very fond of that scent. Can you also tell me, Madame, whether M'sieu's mistress wears silk underclothing and night-dresses? '

" ' No, my child, cambric and lace.'

" ' Oh! then she is of altogether superior station; for silk underclothing is getting quite commonplace! '

" ' What you say is very true.'

" ' That is all then, Madame; I will enter your service.'

" And so as a matter of fact she did immediately, and as if she had done nothing else all her life.

" An hour later my husband came home. Rose did not even raise her eyes to him. But he raised his eyes to her! She already gave out a strong odour of verbena, and in five minutes she left the room. Immediately he asked me: ' Who is that girl? '

" ' Why . . . my new lady's-maid.'

" ' Where did you pick her up? '

" ' Baronne de Grangerie got her for me, with the best references.'

" ' H'm! . . . She is rather pretty.'

" ' Do you think so? '

" ' Why . . . yes, for a lady's-maid.'

" I was delighted, for I felt that already he was biting, and that same evening Rose said to me: ' I can promise now that it will not take more than a fortnight; M'sieu is very easily caught.'

" ' Ah! you have tried already? '

" ' No, Madame, he only asked me what my name was . . . so that he might hear what my voice was like! '

" ' Very well, my dear Rose. Get on as quick as you can.'

" ' Do not be alarmed, Madame, I shall only resist long enough not to make myself depreciated.'

" At the end of a week my husband scarcely ever went

out. I saw him roaming about the house all the afternoon, and what was most significant about the matter was that he no longer prevented me from going out. And I—I was out of doors nearly all day long . . . in order . . . in order to leave him at liberty!

"On the ninth day, whilst Rose was undressing me, she said to me with a timid air: 'It . . . it happened this morning, Madame!'

"I was rather surprised, and even rather overcome, not at the thing itself, but at the way in which she had told me, and I stammered out: 'And . . . and it went off well?'

"'Oh! yes, very well, Madame. For the last three days he has been pressing me, but I did not wish matters to proceed too quickly. . . . You will tell me when you want us to be caught, Madame?'

"'Yes, certainly. . . . Well, let us say Thursday.'

"'Very well, Madame, I shall grant nothing more till then, so as to keep M'sieu on the alert.'

"'You are sure you won't fail?'

"'Oh! quite sure, Madame; I will keep him excited so as to ensure that he will be there at the very moment you appoint.'

"'Let us say five o'clock, then.'

"'Very well, Madame, and where?'

"'Well . . . in my bedroom.'

"'Very good, Madame, in your bedroom.'

"You will understand what I did then, my dear. I went and fetched Mama and Papa first of all, and then my uncle d'Orvelin, the President, and M'sieu Raplet, the Judge, my husband's friend. I had not told them what I was going to show them, but I made them all go up on tiptoe as far as the door of my room. I waited till five o'clock exactly, and oh! how my heart did beat! I had made the porter come upstairs as well, so as to have an additional witness. And then . . . then at the moment when the clock began to strike I opened the door wide! Ah! ah! ah! It was

plain that he was evidently . . . it was quite evident, my dear . . .! Oh! what a head . . . if you had only seen his head! And he turned round, the idiot! Oh! how funny he looked. . . . I laughed and laughed! And Papa was frightfully angry and wanted to give my husband a good hiding. And the porter—a good servant—helped him to dress himself. . . . What a joke it was . . . he even helped him to button his braces! . . . As for Rose, she was perfect, absolutely perfect. . . . She cried—oh! she cried very well. She's an invaluable girl. . . . If ever you want her, don't forget!

"And here I am . . . I came immediately to tell you all about it . . . directly. I am free! Long live divorce!"

And she began to dance about the room. But the little baronne, who was thoughtful and put out, said:

"Why did you not invite me to see it too?"

PAUL CHARLES JOSEPH BOURGET

(*born* 1852)

A GAMBLER

(Translated by JOHN GRAY)

ON leaving the theatre I went to the club, and there I loitered by the baccarat table. I watched, perched up on one of those high chairs used by players who cannot get near the green cloth, or by curious idlers like myself. It was, in the language of the *cercle*, a good game. The banker, a handsome young man in evening dress, with a gardenia in his coat, had lost about three thousand louis. His man-about-town mask struggled against the betrayal of any emotion; but the words dropped dryly from his lips; and he would not have chewed so nervously at the stump of his extinguished cigar if his thought and imagination had not been all engrossed in the cold frenzy of gaming. Opposite him was a person with white hair, a professional gambler, who acted as croupier. He, on the contrary, took no pains to conceal his bad temper at the turn of his luck, which, hand after hand, diminished the pile of counters before him. But the greatest joviality lighted up the countenances of the punters, who, seated at the table, spread out their winnings and marked with a pencil on a piece of paper the alternation of the deal, with that superstition the most sceptical cannot avoid the moment they touch a card. Certainly there is a fascination in every struggle, a seven against an eight, or a king against an ace, that rivets our curiosity; for there we were round those players, some fifty or so of us, following the game most intently, and never noticing how the night was slipping by.

Some philosopher has still to explain that curious inertia of the small hours to which, in Paris, so many men are liable; no matter where, so long as it is away from their own quarters, they will rest immobile from work or pleasure. For my part I do not regret in the least having given over that particular night to the unhealthy charm of midnight watches, for, had I gone home properly at a respectable hour, I should not have seen my friend, the painter Miraut, in the supper-room taking his little bowl of soup all by himself; he would not have offered to drop me at my door, and then I should never have heard the gambling story he told me, which I wrote down next morning as well as I could, and which he has now given me permission to retell.

"What the devil were you doing at the club so late?" he asked me. "You did not have supper there?"

"Watching the play," I answered. "I left young Lautrec getting on nicely; he had lost to the tune of sixty thousand . . ."

The carriage rocked as I pronounced these words. I saw Miraut side-face, lighting his cigarette. I took in again his air of Francis the First—the Titian portrait in the Louvre—a profile whose beauty was but amplified and filled out by the fifty summers it had seen. Is it not strange that with his solid build, his broad shoulders, his expression of greedy, almost gluttonous sensuality, he should remain the most exquisite painter of flowers and of women? Add that the most musical of voices comes from his gladiator chest, that his hands—I remarked them afresh as he manœuvred the match and the cigarette—have a delicacy almost feminine.

I know very well, from experience, that my weather-beaten friend has real warmth in his heart, and I was not much astonished at the melancholy confidence I involuntarily evoked by my remarks on the game of baccarat. Fortunately he had plenty of time to tell me the story.

As we approached the Seine the fog became denser, the carriage went only at a walk, and my companion let himself

go, recalling for me a story deeply buried in his memory. Policemen passed hither and thither carrying torches; other torches were burning along the coping of the bridge over which we were passing, and running over the stonework in streams of flaming resin; fantastic silhouettes of other carriages that passed ours, in the filthy black fog pierced here and there with the moving lights in the street, no doubt heightened the impression of the past to which my friend abandoned himself, for little by little his voice became softer and lower, as if in spirit he was drifting far, far away from me. Now and then I interrupted him an instant, but no more than gently to excite his memory.

"I have never," he began, "played but twice, and—will you believe me?—I cannot to this day even bear to look at players. There are moments, you know, one's nerves are not always equally steady, when the very sight of a card forces me to leave a room. Ah! what it means to me, those two games! . . . a terrible recollection. . . ."

"Who has not similarly?" I interrupted. "I was present when our poor friend Paul Durien thought fit to quarrel over a doubtful point in that very club we have just quitted; and then that ridiculous duel . . . and we laid him in the earth four days after I had pressed his hand up there, before that very green table. . . . There is always tragedy more or less connected with cards; crime and suicide and dishonour. . . . But somehow nothing can prevent one going back to them; just as in Spain one goes again and again to bull-fights, for all the horses ripped up, the wounded picadors, the tortured and slaughtered bull."

"That may be," resumed Miraut, "provided one has not been a party to such a tragedy; which is precisely my case. Oh! and the circumstances were so simple! . . . When you have heard them you will understand that the most innocent proposal of bezique gives me a sickness of horror such as a man would experience in a rifle range if he had once killed someone by accident while cleaning a gun.

. . . It was in the first year of my joining the club, in 1872; the year also of my first success at the Salon. . . ."

"Your Ophelia among the flowers? . . . How well I remember it! . . . I can still see that knot of pale roses against the fair hair, roses of a pallor so blond, so tender, and the roses that lay upon her heart, black roses like splashes of blood. . . . Who has that picture, by the way?"

"A New York banker," said the painter, heaving a sigh; "he paid forty thousand for it, and I sold it at the time for fifteen hundred. . . . Ah! I was not then the fortunate painter of whom your malicious *alter ego* Claude Larcher could say: 'Happy Miraut, to look all day at an American girl and get fifteen thousand francs for his trouble!' . . . Between you and me he might have found a fitter subject than an old friend for his pleasantries. . . . *Enfin*, God rest his soul. But if I mention figures," he continued, laying his hand upon my arm to check the impetuous defence I was ready to make of the memory of dear Claude, "do not think I wish to boast of my commercial value. No. Only those fifteen hundred francs have to do with what I am telling you. Imagine that I had never in my life before handled such a sum. I had had a very hard time of it. When I came to Paris it was with a little subsidy from my native township, a thousand francs a year, and for six years I had to do what I could with that alone . . . practically. . . ."

"I have known something of such hardship," I said, "but not for long. Did you ever go to Polydore's, Rue Monsieur le Prince, like us, where you can manage to get a *déjeuner* for eighteen sous? When next you see Jacques Molan and he begins to bore you with his society women, and the exquisite tone of his next novel, just you ask him about Polydore. It won't take long, and you will be rid of him in five minutes. . . ."

"We resolved the problem by communism," resumed the painter. "Some comrades and I took pot-luck together.

The sweetheart of one of us, who had formerly been a cook —pardon, but it is a fact—managed two meals a day for us, at the rate of forty francs a month. Fifteen francs for a bedroom. No attendance. I used to make my own bed. So, sixty francs for essentials. I dressed like a beggar, and I never knew the luxury of an omnibus. The others lived in the same style, and we did not do so badly on the whole. There was Tardif the sculptor, Sudre the animal painter, Rivals the engraver, and then the most talented of the lot, the 'steward'—our housekeeper was known as the 'stewardess'—Ladrat. . . ."

"Ladrat? Ladrat?" said I, trying to recall. "I know that name."

"You read it in the papers," continued the painter, whose face was gradually darkening; "but I shall come to that. This Ladrat, who carried off all the prizes at the school, was already the victim of the terrible vice. He drank. What would you expect? In the loose life we led, half-workmen, and everlastingly mixed up with models and work-people, we were exposed to plenty of low temptations, and to that particular one most of all. Ladrat fell to it. I only tell you this that you may not judge me too harshly presently. It was this lamentable proclivity that spoilt his chance for the Prix de Rome. He soaked himself so thoroughly in drink that the composition he had sketched out with the hand of a master was a pitiable fiasco when he completed it. In short, in 1872 he was the only one of the original company who was still in the gutter—and a dirty gutter it was. He had become what we call a *tapeur*, the man who wanders from one studio to another, and borrows five francs here, five francs there, with the most distinct determination never to repay. That style of life can go on for years."

"And I suppose he thanked you with a kick," I replied, "like that Legrimandet whom I knew, who never went to see Mareuil without asking him to remember the grotto—

that was his formula—and without insulting him afterwards to save his dignity. One day, for example, he found him correcting the proofs of an article that was about to appear. He begged. André acceded. 'Monsieur,' he said, as the white coin slipped into his pocket, 'would you like to know how to determine whether a writer has talent? You have only to know if the journals take his copy. If they do it is all up with him, he is a mediocrity. . . . Good-bye. . . .' That is the sort of man?"

"No," said Miraut, "Ladrat was not a man of that kind. He was thankful, he burst into tears, swore he would work, and went off to the first café to soak himself with absinthe. Then he was ashamed of himself, and would not reappear for several days. Besides, he never borrowed very much—never more than five francs. So I was not a little surprised one afternoon coming in to find a long letter from him, asking me for no less a sum than two hundred francs. More than six months had elapsed since last I had seen him, and he rehearsed to me at length how, during those six months, he had struggled against his besetting vice, how he had not drunk, how he had tried to work, but that his strength had failed him, that his wife was ill—he still lived with the 'stewardess'—really one of those piteous letters of entreaty that make one's heart turn sick."

"When one takes it all in," I insinuated, "for in ten years of Paris one gets so many such letters, and out of the lot, perhaps two genuine ones. . . ."

"Better to risk being a dupe to all the others than to refuse those two," said the painter. "Besides, I had not the slightest doubt of Ladrat's sincerity. It happened that the same day I had received the fifteen hundred francs for the Ophelia. I have always been very scrupulous with regard to money. I had no debts, and I had in a drawer about as much again set aside for an evil hour. My studio was certain, my wardrobe was well stocked for that year at all events. I remember how in thought I drew up an inventory

of my position, as I brushed my dress things to turn up at one of my first dinners, one of those dinners to which one goes as a lion, with the appetite of a vagrant, and the *amour-propre* of a schoolboy. One credits equally the genuineness of the wines and the sincerity of the eulogy. All the time I compared my own enviable position with that of the poor devil I had once lived with, and I had one of those generous impulses that come to youth as readily as its grace and lightheartedness. I took ten louis, put them in an envelope, addressed it, and called the concierge. If that man had been in his place my poor friend would have had the money that very evening, but the concierge was away on some errand. 'It will do to-morrow,' I said to myself, and I went off, leaving the envelope all ready on the table. My resolution was so firm on the subject that I experienced in advance all the complacency of conscience that a generous action vouchsafes. The sensation is perhaps born of petty vanity, but it is very human; there are many others more ignoble; witness the one that succeeded, for me, the same evening, and almost immediately.

"At the house where I dined I sat between two most elegant women, who rivalled one another in the fuss and flattery they bestowed upon me. In short, I went away towards eleven o'clock helpless in a vertigo of fatuity, feeling myself master of the whole world; I found myself at our club, which then occupied a house in the Place Vendôme, escorted by a man who had been dining at the same house and who had undertaken to chaperon me. I had not set foot there during the six weeks I had been a member and I did not know a soul. Two painters had proposed me, and the prospect of the annual exhibition was the only thing that had induced me to stand for election. We came into the big room. I was so childishly simple that I asked my mentor what game it was that attracted such a swarm of people about the table. He laughed, and in a few words explained to me the rules of baccarat. 'That doesn't tempt you?'

he said. 'Why not?' I replied, a little vexed at my ignorance, 'except that I have no money about me.' He explained to me, much amused all the time, that I had only to go to the secretary and write my name to get three thousand francs, on the promise to repay within twenty-four hours. I understood afterwards that this person had simply tempted me for what the proverbial novice's luck might bring to himself. But I would have tempted myself without his help. I was in the state where one cries, like that other, to the ferryman in the storm, 'You carry Cæsar and his fortune. . . .' Oh! a very small fortune, for as I sat down to the table, I whispered to my companion: 'I am going to sign for five louis, and, if I lose, I am off. . . .'"

"And you lost, but stayed on. There is an echo to that in my own memory," I replied, laughing.

"It was not quite as simple as that," answered Miraut. "My tempter, who sat beside me, told me to await my hand. I obeyed. The hand came to me. I threw down mine. I had risked my five louis. 'Double,' whispered my adviser. I doubled. I threw down eight. I doubled again, seven, and I had won. Then I passed six times running. At the seventh hand, still advised by my companion, I staked a louis only. I lost. But I had about three thousand francs before me.

"My companion, who had won about the same sum, rose up and said to me, 'If you are wise, you will come now.' But I did not listen to him. The fascination I felt was too strong for me to tear myself away so easily. I am not of those you call analysts of the mind, whom I call—what is the word I want?—hair-splitters, egoists—and I do not pass my life dissecting my thoughts and emotions. Pardon me then if I only explain myself to you crudely, and by the first images that come to my fancy. During the short time I had been winning, all my being was invaded by intoxicating pride; a sort of exalted consciousness of my personality stirred me, buoyed me up. I have experienced a similar

emotion swimming in deep sea. The vast restless mass of water that threatens you and rocks you on its face, that you dominate with your own strength; yes, that is the exact symbol of what gambling was for me in its first phase, victory; for I won again in the same proportions as at first, and again and again. I risked heavy sums upon my own hands, and only trivial stakes on those of others; but every time I touched the cards my luck was so invariable that there was a dead silence around me until I threw down, and then a thrill of admiration.

" Perhaps without that admiration I could have had the courage to desist. Alas! I have always had the confidence of the very devil; it has led me into a hundred scrapes already, and no doubt, in spite of my grey hair, has others yet in store for me. I know it, mark you, I take it into account; but, not a bit of good, given a gallery, I cannot bear that anyone should say, ' He has thrown up.' It is sublime to be like that when the scene is, say, at the bridge of Arcole, but at a baccarat table, and before the hazard of cards, it is idiotic; nevertheless my pride was so childish that after having shown off under a run of good luck, I would not bend before the turn of bad which I felt was approaching. For I *did* feel it: there came a certain moment when I knew I was going to lose, and the faith in my fortune, which previously had made me take up the cards with absolute confidence, was suddenly eclipsed. I was destined in that one sitting to experience all the emotions gambling can give to its devotees; after the intoxication of gain comes the sharp and exquisite intoxication of losing. For, yes, such it is. You know the saying, ' At play, after the pleasure of loss . . .' I can find no other words to explain to you that sort of vitiated ardour, that mixture of hope and despair, of cowardice and obstinacy. One counts on overcoming misfortune, knowing all the time that one will be beaten. One loses the faculty of reasoning, one plays on hands that one sees are absurd. And the counters

dwindle, first the red, then the white, and fresh vouchers have to be signed. After having had the habit during ten years of looking hard at thirty-five sous for a cab, as I had had, one stakes five hundred, a thousand francs, without hesitation. But I will sum it all up in one word: I had gone into the club at eleven o'clock, at two I turned the key of my door, having lost the entire three thousand francs to my credit; and that, as I told you, was practically all I had."

"Ah, well," I said to him, "if you did not become a gambler after that blow, it is because you were not born for it. It was enough to have ruined you for life."

"You are right," replied Miraut; "when I awoke next morning from the dejected sleep that follows such sensations, all the scenes of the previous night came back to my memory, and I had two ideas only; first, to take my revenge the same evening, and second, to stake differently in accordance with the experience I had gained. Mentally I replayed certain hands that I had lost but ought to have won. Suddenly my eyes fell on the envelope addressed to Ladrat that was lying on the table. An involuntary calculation passed in my brain; surely the gift to Ladrat of the money he asked for would be a senseless sacrifice. When I had paid the three thousand francs I owed I should have scarcely anything left. In order to put something in my pocket that would permit me to return to the club in the evening—and I felt that it was out of my power not to return—I should have to borrow from a picture-dealer, to get rid of some of my studies. In that way I should raise fifty louis, ten of which I was going to set aside for that good-for-nothing, for that drunkard, that liar! For I wished to convince myself that his letter was nothing but a tissue of falsehood. I took it up and re-read it. Ah! its tone tore my heart afresh. But no. I did not want to hear that voice, so I jumped up immediately and dashed off a letter of refusal—swiftly and dryly I wrote it, in order to put the irreparable between my old comrade and my pity. The letter gone, I felt a certain

amount of shame and remorse; but I deadened my feelings as well as I could, going about the business of raising the money which lay before me. 'Besides,' I said to myself, to calm my conscience absolutely, 'If I win I shall be able to send the sum to Ladrat to-morrow—and I am going to win.'"

"And did you?" I asked, as he stopped.

"Yes," he replied, in a voice that was quite different, "more than five hundred louis, but next day it was too late. Immediately on receiving my letter of refusal, Ladrat, who had not lied at all, was seized no doubt with the madness of despair. His mistress and he took the fatal resolution and suffocated themselves. They were found dead upon their bed, and it was I—*I*, mark you, who had the door forced. I had the two hundred francs with me. . . . Yes, it was too late! . . . That is how it is you remember having read the name of Ladrat in the papers. Do you understand now why the sight of a card fills me with horror?"

"But think," I said, "if you had sent him the money in the evening, that might have saved him for a month, or perhaps two; but sooner or later he would have gone down, his vice would have reasserted itself, and he would have finished in the same way."

"That is quite possible," replied the painter, "but, you see, in life one must not be the drop that makes the cup overflow."

FRANÇOIS ÉLIE JULES LEMAÎTRE

(1853–1914)

(I)

SERENUS

I

TWO MARTYRS

One morning in the month of March in the year 90, an hour before sunrise, a few men were assembled at the gate of the Mamertine prison, on the steps of the stairs that led from the slope of the Asylum to the street called that of the forum of Mars. In the middle was an old man with a long, white beard, thick veins on his forehead, and piercing eyes. Two empty litters lay at the bottom of the steps.

It was cold; a drizzling rain fell; in the east the sky held a tinge of wan and miry yellow. The Eternal City, which was just emerging from darkness, displayed all round the Capitol a sort of wave of greyish houses, like a muddy sea after a storm. Huge monuments rose up here and there, and their wet summits shone feebly in the dawn.

"It is morning, Styrax," said the old man to one of his companions.

"Yes, most holy father. My poor master, Serenus, was able to send me word yesterday evening, and I have done what had to be done in order that they should give us his body. And here is Demea, who will take charge of that of the illustrious ex-consul, Flavius Clemens. The lictor and the triumvirs who preside over executions are already in the prison; but the jailer will not allow us to enter until all is over."

"Let us pray for our brethren," murmured the old man.

At that moment the three magistrates whose duty it was to preside at executions went out of the prison. Styrax presented to one of them a document on which a seal was affixed.

"It is correct; the jailer will give you the bodies," said the triumvir, pointing to a fair-haired giant, a man of Germanic race, who was standing, with a torch in his hand, on the threshold of the half-open door.

Styrax and Demea entered behind the jailer, followed by the old man and by three men carrying the stretchers.

A vestibule, a long dark corridor, some steps, and then a cell. In the middle, a body covered with a mantle, and a severed head, a long head with hollow cheeks and grey hair.

"This is the body of Flavius Clemens," said the jailer.

A small pool of blood shone on the ground. One of the men dipped into it the corner of a piece of white linen, which he carefully rolled up and hid under his tunic.

They passed into the next cell.

The body of a young man lay in the corner. The head had not been severed from the trunk. The beard and hair were black, the features delicate and proud. By a singular circumstance, the refined lips, half-open in a slight grimace, and the somewhat hard bend of the narrowed eyebrows seemed to give that handsome and enigmatic countenance an air of irony and pride even in death.

"This," said the jailer, "is the body of Marcus Annæus Serenus. He was found dead this morning, and the triumvirs said that it was not worth while to behead a corpse. I think he poisoned himself."

The rugged face of the old priest contracted suddenly. It showed surprise, pain, and anger.

"You are mistaken," he said harshly; "Marcus had been ill a long time. Prison has finished him, and it is

not surprising. Is it not so, brethren?" he added in an imperious tone, turning towards his companions.

Styrax was weeping. The others were busy placing the two bodies on the stretchers, and when this was done they kissed the feet.

On their way out they met a group of idlers—porters, slaves, and a public crier—who followed the procession curiously with their eyes.

"Would you all like to know," said the crier, "who it is that you have just seen carried feet forwards on their last journey? Two patricians, if you please! Flavius Clemens, the ex-consul, the Emperor's own cousin, and Serenus, whose father, in bygone times, helped to recruit pretty women for Nero's pleasures. Domitian has condemned them to death because they conspired against the State, and, although they were patricians, he has had them put in prison and beheaded, because that was his good pleasure. Only, as you see, he has excused their bodies from being publicly exposed, a thing he would not do for people who were as poor as you or me. The ex-consul's wife and niece as well as Serenus's sister are now on their way to the island of Pandataria. Besides, these things were done without the least noise. It was in the same way that, two or three years ago, not a few senators and great ladies disappeared one fine morning without anybody knowing why. It teaches us the vanity of greatness. As to those people who are with the two dead men, they are Christians, that is to say, the scum of the Jews. They worship an ass's head and are the enemies of the Roman people. I am by trade a carrier of news, being the grandson and successor of the famous Vulteius Mena, who lived under the divine Augustus, and of whom the poet Horace has left an account. And now, as it is nearly daybreak and we must get on with our work, I am going to the tavern to drink a pot of Sabine wine."

Meanwhile the little band of Christians, after having

passed along the Via Sacra and the Via Triumphalis, passed through the Capenan Gate and took the Appian Way. At that hour the road was almost deserted, except for a few market-gardeners who, with their carts, were making for the city.

The rain had ceased, and fine weather had come with the dawn. The tombs that bordered both sides of the ringing causeway shone with the recent rain, and sparkled in the light of the sun which was now rising through the groves that surrounded the sepulchres. Raindrops glistened on the fresh leaves of the rose-laurels; the lilac was in flower, and on the branches of other trees the early leaves were coming out like a green froth. Birds were singing about the sepulchres, and a pleasant odour hung in the air.

The Christians, with their haggard faces bending over the bodies of their martyrs, passed sadly through this scene of nature's joy and animation. One of them, however, could not prevent himself from saying:

"What a beautiful morning!"

The look which the old priest turned towards him made him understand that he had spoken idly. Evidently the old man cared nothing for the trees, the birds, or the sun. He was indifferent to everything except his own thoughts, and the joy of external things was at the moment an offence from which he turned away his eyes.

After walking along the Appian Way for about an hour, the Christians turned to the right, and took the Via Ardeatina. At the end of some few hundred paces they stopped in front of a long, low building of brick that stood against a little hill blooming with primroses. This was the tomb of Flavius Clemens. They opened the door, lighted a torch, and placed the two bodies in a large subterranean chamber.

The priest dismissed his companions:

"Leave me with our martyrs; to-morrow we shall celebrate their funerals. Inform the faithful of it."

Left alone, he placed the torch in an iron sconce fixed in the wall. From time to time flickers of light shone strongly on his rugged features, which one would have said had been carved out of some hard wood, and played upon the folds of the two shrouds, which then seemed to move, whilst red reflections danced upon the vaulted roof.

He knelt on the flagstones, between the two corpses, and prayed for a long time. Then he lifted up one of the shrouds and took in his hands the severed head of Flavius Clemens. It was as yellow as wax. The arched nose was already growing thin, and the whites of the reverted eyes and the glitter of the rather long teeth between the bloodless lips gave a terrifying appearance to this dead head. The priest kissed its brow, attempted without success to close the mouth and eyes, and gently placed it back upon the stretcher.

Afterwards he uncovered the face of Serenus. The ironical mouth had relaxed, the bend of the eyebrows had become effaced, and the immobile features had an impress of gentle sweetness. The priest gazed long and piercingly on that pleasing countenance, as if he desired to look into the mysterious soul which no longer dwelt in that graceful body. And as he gazed at it, he was possessed with anger against this Christian who seemed to have passed away without pain, like a Gentile in his warmed bath, against this doubtful martyr whose body showed no mark of expiatory sufferings, against this man, almost smiling in his last sleep, who had carried away his secret with him.

While he was scrutinizing this corpse with a silent and furious interrogation, one of his hands rested on Serenus's breast. He felt beneath the shroud something unyielding, which had the shape of a roll of papyrus. He searched the dead man's clothing and found in the folds of the silken tunic, which he roughly tore open, a little purple case, and in the case a narrow band of parchment rolled around a

little ivory stick. He recognized the handwriting of Serenus; but, as the characters were very small, he could not decipher them by the flickering light of the torch.

Then, without even thinking of covering up the pale face of his brother in Christ, he rushed from the sepulchre, hastily closed the door, and fled towards Rome with rapid steps.

The crowd was beginning to swarm in the streets. There were bands of clients going to seek doles, or slaves returning with provisions; idlers collected round a street acrobat or a juggler; vendors of charms and vendors of tripe; citizens waiting their turn under a barber's shelter; women of the people crowding, with earthenware bowls in their hands, in front of taverns where were sold fried peas, boiled lupines, beans, and sausages made of boiled sheep's heads; children almost naked and as brown as crickets, paddling in the mud of the kennel; a troop of asses carrying refuse in osier panniers; beams of wood rocking on carts; jolts, shouts, oaths, voices lost in an immense murmur; all colours, all costumes, all languages—a mingling of all the people of the universe.

But the old man, wrapped in a coarse mantle of grey wool, elbowed and forced his way through the crush without seeing anything or hearing anything. He plunged into the Via Suburra and entered a cracked and dark old house, five storeys high, which stood between a tavern frequented by slaves and a cobbler's stall. It was here that he lived, because he was a very holy man who practised poverty and treated his body harshly, and also because he found in this miserable district better and more numerous opportunities for preaching the faith of Christ.

He climbed a steep and uneven staircase of wood, built in the inner courtyard. When he reached the fifth storey, he opened a door on which was written in red letters the name—*Timotheus*.

This was the old man's name, and the inscription was

intended to make it easier for the faithful to find his garret. A straw mat, a stool, a table, and some earthen vessels made up his furniture. Through the window, where the wind was tossing an ill-fastened curtain, there entered the noise of Rome.

Timotheus drew Serenus's manuscript from beneath his tunic and read it eagerly.

II

THE MANUSCRIPT OF SERENUS

"I am very foolish to undertake this confession. Either it will not be read, or it will grieve those who will read it. But perhaps by describing myself to myself for the last time, I shall justify myself in my own eyes. Excellent hearts have loved me, and none has truly known me. Now, although I have long prided myself on living within myself and allowing nobody to enter there, my secret weighs upon me to-day. A regret comes to me, almost a remorse, for having played so well the strange part that circumstances and my curiosity have ended by imposing on me. I should like, so as to persuade myself that I could not have done otherwise, to go back over the chain of my feelings and actions from my most distant past to this day on which I am going to die.

"My father, L. Annæus Serenus, was Nero's captain of the guards. He had a noble heart, a restless spirit, and a feeble will. He was ambitious and yet convinced of the vanity of all things, voluptuous and yet prompt to feel the bitterness that lies beneath carnal pleasures, loving life and despising it, full of desires and void of illusions. He consented to pass for the lover of Acte, the freedwoman, so that, under this disguise, Nero, who was then very young and closely watched over by Agrippina, might be able to see his mistress freely. There was nothing noble in this

part to which my father lent himself. His excuse was that he only half lied, Acte not being very cruel. But he thus ran a greater hazard than he would have done if he had refused the prince this delicate service. But it was one of my father's characteristics to take vengeance upon his own weaknesses by dangerous caprices. Add to this that the morals of the Eastern Courts were beginning to be introduced into that of the Roman emperors, and that obedience to the prince, in no matter what circumstances, was already regarded as honourable. Finally, my father had a sort of affection for Nero, which was in part justified. Nero was at that epoch a vain, violent, and crafty young man, but he was not without artistic tastes, and sometimes his feline and engaging manners had the appearance of tenderness. Later, that bad actor, infatuated with power, became one of the worst of men. At eighteen, he was only a handsome and capricious monster, sometimes as attractive as a woman.

"My father was only able to give me very little attention, and my mother did not bother to give me any. My early education was thus entrusted to slaves, and to witty and immoral Greek preceptors. Happily, a certain distinction of nature preserved me from a precocious degradation. I was an intelligent child, excessively impressionable, gentle, thoughtful, and without gaiety.

"I was twelve years old when the great fire destroyed half of Rome and deprived two hundred thousand wretches of their homes. For two or three years, in spite of the enormous distribution of bread and money ordered by the Emperor, there was frightful misery in Rome. The spectacle of so much unmerited suffering wounded me to the heart with an incurable wound. I realized the injustice of things and the absurdity of human destinies. I found it unjust that my father should have five hundred slaves when so many poor people were dying of hunger. I gave them all the money of which I could dispose. But with the rigid

logic of my years, I thought they owed me no thanks, and I fled from their effusions, the crudity of which, moreover, offended my childish and aristocratic taste.

"One day my preceptor led me to a great feast which Nero was giving to the people in his gardens. In order to avert the anger of the mob, who accused him of having started the fire, he caused several hundreds of Christians to be arrested. Most of these had recently been thrown to the beasts in the circus. Others, clothed in sacks that had been smeared with resin, were fastened to large stakes some distance apart from one another along the broad walks. As night fell, these were set on fire. The populace crowded with shouts around these living torches. The flame which enveloped the victims was sometimes blown aside by the wind, and disclosed horrible faces and gaping mouths whose cries could not be heard. An odour of burnt flesh filled the air. . . . I had an attack of nerves, and I was carried away half dead.

"The shock was a severe one; and although the most painful impressions are quickly effaced at that age, some remnant of it remained with me, a lassitude that seized me at certain moments, a melancholy, a weariness of life, rare in a child.

"Meanwhile, Seneca, my father's friend, had retired from the Court, and, in his country house, was preparing to make a good death. He was a strange and engaging man; a great director of souls, who knew how to penetrate into their recesses and communicate to others the strength and serenity which he himself lacked; a fastidious being, fond of luxury and a life of elegance, who imposed upon himself secret privations and lived like a Pythagorean; the best and noblest of men if he had not feared death. It was for this reason that he spoke of it so often. He spent twenty years conquering his fear; and when he had succeeded, it was almost too late for the honour of his memory.

"My father often went to see him. He took me with

him, and I was present during their interviews. I was fifteen years old; and I listened eagerly to their words. I soon embraced Stoicism with a youthful fervour.

"An Intelligence is immanent in the world; there it creates order in all its degrees, and the wise man is its highest expression. Virtue is conformity with the will of the universal order. Justice and reason tend to reign in the world. If evil seems to us to triumph, it is because we do not see all, and we occupy ourselves with but a moment of duration. Let us abstain, let us suffer. Let us seek our joy in ourselves. After death, we shall either live a superior life in an ethereal region, or we shall enter again into the bosom of God.—I loved this philosophy of detachment and pride, and I lived arrogantly within myself, proud of feeling myself a possessor of the secret of the sublime aims of the universe.

"On certain points I went farther than my masters. Seneca proclaimed the equality of men: I inferred the emancipation of slaves. My father, with greater calmness, said: 'Let us wait!'

"I greatly admired Seneca's bombastic death. His wife, Paulina, a rather simple woman who was always on her knees before her husband, opened one of her own veins, desiring to follow him. Happily help came in time to save her, and she did not reject it. I have since suspected that there was a little acting, or at least arrangement, in all this.

"Shortly afterwards came the civil war, the soldiers of Otho and Vitellius butchering one another in the streets of Rome, and the ignoble populace looking on at the massacre as at the games in the circus. The sight of so much horror and shame revived the frightful impressions of my childhood and confirmed me in my proud sadness.

"My father, whom I loved tenderly, died in the first year of Vespasian's reign. Towards the end of his life he thought me too formal and austere, and rallied me on

the rigidity of my youthful restraint. After having passed through Stoicism, he had reached an indulgent and amused scepticism, no longer believing in anything, but finding the world curious as it is, even though it be abominable, and valuing above all things kindness and gentleness. I struggled to bear this burden like a Stoic, but before his funeral pyre I burst into tears.

"My mother died two months later, in giving life to my beloved sister, Serena. Thus I was left almost alone in the world, master of a very large fortune, and free from all material cares. Styrax, my father's old steward, managed my property, and my little sister was under the care of the faithful Athana, my mother's nurse, who was devoted body and soul to our house. I led a studious and austere life, reading the philosophers and poets, eating nothing but vegetables and sleeping on a mat, polite to all who approached me, but preferring my solitude and my meditations to the society of men, and honestly endeavouring to realize the ideal of the sage. But I was chaste and respected my body. Among the fair symbolical divinities whom we have borrowed from Greece, I chose the proud Artemis for patron, and I had sworn, like the Hippolytus of Euripides, never to know women.

"In spite of my theories, I still kept my slaves. At least I postponed their freedom, telling myself that they were not unhappy in my service, and also finding a pleasure in keeping them without making use of their services, and in living like a poor man in the midst of all the resources of extreme opulence.

"This fine Stoic ardour lasted three months. Then came lassitude, a doubt concerning the excellence of this rule of life, a vague desire for something else. Doubtless also the effort against Nature that I had just made left me too fatigued and thus more disarmed and weak against temptations.

"One spring day, I went, for the first time since my

bereavement, to one of those places of promenade frequented by people who love pleasure. I rubbed elbows in the temple of Pompey with painted and perfumed women, sparkling with jewels. Continuing to stroll at hazard, I found myself in the Appian Way at the fashionable hour. There was a dazzling concourse of luxurious equipages, men of fashion in their litters borne on the shoulders of eight slaves, open chairs in which matrons reclined, fanned by negresses. Two Numidian grooms went past me like a whirlwind, and behind them came a carriage hung with red silk, and driven by a woman of great beauty. I gazed at her with a rather shy and sullen air, hiding an ingenuous admiration. She stopped her horses and made me a sign to mount beside her. I obeyed, and it was only the next day that I remembered the precepts of the Porch. This woman was Lycisca, a notorious freedwoman. What was the reason of this caprice of hers? Perhaps when she met me, she knew who I was and knew that I was rich. She pretended that she had carried me off simply to amuse herself and because my looks, which were like those of an astonished young savage, had pleased her. This is not impossible, for Lycisca was a girl of imagination and caprice. She initiated me into fashionable life, and cost me only two million sesterces.

"Thenceforward it was as if I were possessed with the fury of a revenge. At first, desiring to reconcile my life with my maxims of detachment, I told myself that in order knowingly to despise carnal joys, it is necessary to have experienced them, especially in their most refined and keenest forms. Then, after having excused myself by this admirable philosophical scruple, I abandoned myself to my new life with the curiosity of a psychologist and an artist. I endeavoured to divide myself into two, to stand outside my own sensations in order to analyse them and enjoy them better. But it was the reverse that happened. For if enjoyment is to be as keen as possible, an absence

of introspection, an abandonment of oneself, is doubtless necessary. I had the lassitude and disgust of carnal pleasures without having their intoxication. I desired to awaken this, but precisely because I tried, it did not come. My inexorable habit of introspection made me nearly always unadapted to pleasure. I could not forget myself. In the middle of the wildest or most refined orgy, my head remained cold; I felt the emptiness of all things and I was filled with dissatisfaction.

"And yet, according to all appearances, it has been given me to live in a time when the power and art of enjoyment have been brought to their highest pitch. Never, I think, has there been seen or will there again be seen so small a number of men employing for their own profit and absorbing for their own pleasure a greater number of human existences. Some of my friends had as many as three thousand slaves, and riches whose limits they did not know. And the science of pleasure equalled the resources of which it could dispose. Several generations of a privileged class had studied the means of refining upon, varying, and multiplying agreeable sensations. Assuredly the men who will come after us will be hardly able to form a notion of the life that some among us have known and practised. For reasons which it is useless to give here, the wealth of private persons can only decrease in future. And some men foresee the time when the barbarians will break through the barriers of the Empire. Then will come the close of the banquet. . . .

"But, just as the future will find it hard to imagine the intensity of our physical pleasures, so perhaps it will fail to understand the depth of our satiety; and it will wonder, as it reads our chronicles, at the number of men of our time who have taken their own lives.

"After fifteen years of orgies, coarse and delicate in turn, with my body exhausted, my senses dulled, and my heart completely empty of every belief, even of every illusion,

what was there for me to do? The world seemed to me an absurd spectacle which no longer interested me. I had retained that native gentleness which came to me from my father, but only because it was agreeable to me to be kind, and even this was becoming indifferent to me. Moreover, all action was repugnant to me; public offices, having become base and precarious, disgusted me in advance. I was plunged in an immense and incurable weariness. Having no longer any reason to live, I resolved to die.

"Death did not frighten me: for me it was the great liberator; but I wished it to be without pain.

"After freeing all those of my slaves whom I judged to be capable of making a good use of their liberty, I spent two days without taking any food, and then I placed myself in a bath into which warm water was continually poured. I had caused the marble bath-tub to be installed in the peristyle of my house, and while the heat of the bath was gradually exhausting my strength, rare flowers with strong and heady perfumes were asphyxiating me deliciously. I had the sensation of a voluptuous and mortal swoon, in which little by little my whole being was melting and dissolving. With my head thrown backward, I gazed, without thinking of anything, at one of the corners of the purple curtain of the bathroom, and round about the curtain, some little clouds, floating on the blue sky, assumed the forms of women I had known; and it seemed to me that a fragment of my soul, detaching itself from me at each breath, was going to rejoin them in the kindling azure. . . .

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"'Do you know me, Marcus?' said a very gentle voice.

"I opened my eyes. I was in my bed, and Serena, my sister, was standing beside me.

"Styrax, seeing that I had fainted in my bath, had taken me out of it without heeding the consequences of his disobedience. He had carried me to my room, and had unclenched my teeth and given me a little soup. Brain

fever soon declared itself, and for a week I had lain between life and death.

"When I perceived Serena bending over me, I thought I was looking at some wondrous figure that had come from a better and more beautiful world than ours. She was sixteen years old, had white skin and fair hair, and possessed an immaterial and, so to say, transparent beauty that displayed her whole soul, as well as an air of innocence and gravity that I have never seen except in her.

"My existence had hitherto been entirely separated from hers. She lived retired in her apartment under the care of old Athana. When I determined to die, I did not tell Serena of my intention, fearing a painful scene, and I had not even wished to see her. The poor child had been informed of what took place by Styrax, and had passed seven days and seven nights at my bedside. She was worn out with fatigue, and there was a look of infinite sweetness, the look of a star, in her big eyes.

"'Do you know me, dear Marcus?' she repeated.

"I drew her towards me, kissed her brow, and wept for a long time.

"I recovered, but my attempt at suicide left me extremely weak for several months. I had neither desires nor regrets, neither sadness nor joy. Yet in this death of my being, a new sentiment had awakened. I began to adore my sister Serena, to love her with an humble, timid, religious love; and although I was twenty years older than she, I obeyed her just as a little child obeys his mother. It was more than fraternal affection; it was a particular kind of love, nothing approaching which had I ever before experienced. Serena was so different from all the women I had met. It seemed to me that this love conjured up my earliest days and brought back whatever used to be good in me, my youthful ardours and aspirations towards supreme purity. Then in proportion as my intelligence recovered its vigour, my habits of curiosity came back to me, and little by little

I brought to my passionate affection for my sister the attention of a spectator attracted by the spectacle of an extraordinary soul.

" One day Serena said to me:

" ' Will you do me a great pleasure? Come with me to-morrow morning to the place where I will take you? '

" ' I will go where you wish, Serena.'

" ' Then be ready early.'

" At dawn the next day, Serena was waiting for me in the atrium with some twenty of our slaves.

" ' Are they coming with us? '

" ' Of course.'

" On the way she asked me if I had ever heard of the Christians, and what I knew about them.

" ' Very little,' I answered. ' They are, I believe, a Jewish sect, or, at all events, a creed that has come to us from the East, like many another now in Rome. People say that they are half-starved creatures, mad and distracted, that they have strange ceremonies, that they worship an ass's head, and that they are enemies of the Empire.'

" ' Do you believe that it was they who set fire to Rome in the time of Nero? '

" ' My father did not think so. It was necessary to attribute the guilt to somebody on account of the people; and it was put down to the Christians. And, by the way, you remind me that an idiot of a pedagogue took me to the Emperor's gardens (I was quite a child) to see some of the wretches burnt there——'

" ' You really saw them? ' interrupted Serena, whose eyes suddenly flashed.

" Then, after a long silence, she asked me:

" ' But you, yourself. Do you believe what is said about them? Is it your opinion that the Christians are scoundrels and madmen? '

" ' Oh, I; my dear Serena, I have no opinion on the subject and I don't bother myself about it. And then,

you know, I am not severe towards unhappy people. I am not surprised that the wretches find their lot a bad one, and I can well understand why they should revolt. I have no anger towards them. Rather I have some sympathy, being ill myself, and disgusted with the world as it is, for all rebels whatever be the reason of their rebellion. But why do you ask me all this?'

"'Because I am a Christian,' said Serena calmly.

"I had long learnt to be surprised at nothing.

"'If you are a Christian, Serena, then the Christians are better than people say, and I am curious to make their acquaintance.'

"'You won't have long to wait, for we are there now.'

"And she showed me, on the Via Ardeatina, along which we had been walking for some time, one of the sepulchres of the Flavian family. A man was standing in the vestibule. Serena gave him a password and we entered the vault, followed by our slaves. About fifty persons were there already, most of them kneeling, others seated on stone benches along the walls.

"The partition walls of the sepulchre were pierced with horizontal niches, some of which were closed with tombstones, others yawning and awaiting their dead. Four painted garlands, one of roses, another of thorns, the third of grapes, and the last of laurel, were twined about the arch. Above these garlands, a fresco represented harvesters, with sickles in their hands, cutting the corn. High up on the walls and in the spaces between the niches there were other symbolical pictures whose meaning was revealed to me afterwards—a shepherd carrying a lamb on his shoulders, whom at first I took for Mercury bearing a lamb, anchors, ships, doves, and fishes. At the end of the hall were two pulpits hewn out of the rock. Between the two was a stone altar on which were placed pieces of bread, and wine in a large cup. The hall was lit by copper lamps engraved with the same symbols as were on the walls.

"Other Christians entered. Since the terrible blow with which Nero had struck the sect, they had formed the habit of assembling outside the city, in tombs, under the pretext of funeral ceremonies and repasts. At the period when I knew them they were left undisturbed. But the fear of persecution, a thing which was always possible, gave to these meetings an air of mystery that to me increased their strange novelty.

"I perceived in the assembly the consul for the year, Flavius Clemens. This explained why the meeting was held in one of the tombs of his family. I recognized the wife of Clemens, and his niece, and Pomponia Græcina, and Paulina, Seneca's widow, still pale from having followed her husband more than half-way towards death. They had veils that fell down very low and concealed their hair. Finally, in the front rank, I saw Acte, Nero's old mistress and my father's old friend, still beautiful in spite of her fifty years, and, I think, a little rouged. The remainder of those present seemed to me to consist of poor people and slaves.

"An old priest, with an emaciated though gentle face, who had taken his place in one of the stone seats, stood up, and, in rather bad Latin, made a speech, doubtless for my benefit, which summed up the beliefs of the sect—the first man's sin and its consequences, the redemption of the human race by Jesus, of whom until then I knew nothing except his name and his execution, the union of souls in Jesus signified by the fraternal banquet, and the whole Christian morality expressed in the Beatitudes.

"After this the priest slowly recited prayers in which Jesus was invoked as the Son of God and the Saviour of men. Then he stretched both his hands over the bread and the cup filled with wine, and called to mind that Jesus, at his last meal with his companions, had done this, saying: 'Eat, this is my body; drink, this is my blood. Do this in remembrance of me.' I have since known that some of

the priests and most of the faithful do not understand these words as but a singular and bold image, but believe that in truth they eat and drink God; and this was one of my greatest surprises.

"Finally, the priest distributed the bread to those present, and offered them the cup after having first drunk himself. I did not take part in this love feast, not being initiated as yet.

"All this seemed to me to be grave, majestic, touching, and new. But I felt very clearly, and at once, that for me these rites and this assembly would never be more than a spectacle, and that there was an abyss between those men and myself.

"'My dear Marcus,' said Serena to me as we were going out, 'you have seen what the Christians are. You will like them more as you know them better. I know that you are unhappy. We must make you a convert to Christianity. For it is truth, and it is also consolation.'

"'I will think about it, Serena.'

"I diligently attended the meetings. I found again in the teaching of Callistus (that was the priest's name) a number of the thoughts and maxims of Pythagoras, Zeno, and the ancient sages. Jesus reminded me by his life and execution of the ideal portrait of the just man which Plato has traced. What seemed to me peculiar to the new religion was, first, the rigorous obligation to believe certain dogmas or truths revealed by God. And, second, that all the virtues which philosophers had already known and preached seemed to me to be transformed, among the disciples of Christus, by a new feeling—the love of a God-man and of a crucified God, a perceptible and ardent love, full of tears, confidence, tenderness, and hope. Clearly, neither the personified forces of Nature nor the abstract God of the Stoics have ever inspired anything similar. And this love of God, the source and beginning of the other Christian virtues, communicated to them a purity,

a sweetness, an unction, and, as it were, a perfume, that I had not hitherto experienced.

"I admired these believers with all my heart; but I did not believe. The sole remnant of my philosophical education that remained with me was the conviction that, in spite of obscurities or apparent exceptions, everything happens in this world in accordance with natural laws, and that there are no special miracles. A direct revelation of God, at a given moment in history, the appearance of a God-man on earth, and all the dogmas of the new religion, found in my reason an invincible resistance, which down to this hour has not been overcome.

"I shall confess other repugnances that I sometimes felt.

"The idea which my new brethren had of this world and this life offended some natural feeling or other within me. I recognized the want of logic in such a contradiction; but, in spite of my persistent pessimism, in some degree combated as it was by my curiosity and by my affection for Serena, it displeased me that men should have so great a contempt for the only life of which, after all, we can be certain. Then I found them far too simple, closed to artistic impressions, circumscribed, and inelegant. Moreover, a little concern for our Roman fatherland awakening within me, I was alarmed at the harm that might be done to the Empire if such a conception of life continued to spread, such a detachment from civil duties and profane occupations. At other times, I was decidedly unjust. The mental reservation which these Christians mingled with their affections so as to purify them seemed to me to chill those affections by taking from them their liberty, their grace, and their spontaneity. To be loved in so far as I was redeemed by Jesus and only in view of my eternal salvation, this idea chilled me. And then I was annoyed to find these saints so sure of so many things, and such marvellous things, when I myself had so much

sought without finding, so much doubted in my life, and had finally prided myself on my scepticism.

" My habits of observation also prevented me, in another way, from becoming a Christian. It sometimes caused me a feeling of ill humour, sometimes a malign pleasure, to discover among the Christians those human weaknesses that at other moments I reproached them for desiring to cast off. Clemens, the consul, in this society of brethren equal before God, was treated with special honour, and took pleasure in it. The slaves remained slaves, and their place was in the last ranks. There were rivalries among the women about the preparations for the love feasts and the care of the sacerdotal vestments, and still keener struggles about the priests, in order to win their attention and captivate their favour. Acte, whom the matrons held at a distance, made herself noticeable by her violent piety. She was a woman of disordered imagination and of feeble judgment. She had never wished to believe in Nero's crimes, attributed the punishment of the Christians to Poppæa; and, though already a Christian when Nero died, she had, at her own expense, built a tomb for the abandoned corpse of her former lover. Repelled by the Christian community, then pardoned and readmitted, again recaptured by the wiles of the body, and again pardoned, calmed at last by age, she often embarrassed the venerable Callistus by the indiscretion of her zeal, and by something in her bearing or her toilet that still smacked of the woman of easy virtue. But the gentle old man, anxious that his poor should suffer no loss, managed to humour this extravagant woman, for she was rich and gave generously.

" In spite of these little weaknesses, they were good and beautiful souls. Vainly did I say to myself: ' These saints are making a bargain; they expect to be given Paradise; they practise their sublime virtues for a reward.' But is it not a virtue to believe in that distant recompense, for it is to believe in the justice of God and to conceive it such as

it ought to be? And what virtue is entirely gratuitous? At the time I followed the maxims of the Stoics, had I not for my reward the proud consciousness of my moral superiority?

"And what a faith animated that little band! They no longer, as did the first Christians, believed in the approaching end of the world, or in the earthly Jerusalem. But they did not doubt that the dominion of the universe was assured to their religion. In fact, there were already Christian communities in all the important cities of the Empire, and the 'Churches' continually exchanged news and sent messages of encouragement and hope to one another. And, feeling that in their faith there was an incalculable power, and in their dogmas something that suited the needs of most men, especially of the suffering and the humble, I thought that perhaps they were right, and that the future belonged to them, that if in a century or two the Empire should sink under the shock of the barbarians, the religion of Jesus might flourish on its ruins. If this is to happen, what will the new race of men be like? Doubtless it will have more virtue, and consequently more happiness, since happiness comes especially from the soul. On the other hand, it will have less art and elegance, less understanding of the beautiful.

"But what matters to me the changing face of mysterious humanity after my death? What I know is that I saw for the first time, in the tomb on the Via Ardeatina, the goodness of simple souls, the resignation of the wretched, love of suffering, and spotless chastity.

"It was there that I saw the admirable charity of Styrax, my freedman. When he learnt that I frequented the assemblies of the Christians, he begged me one day to take him to them, saying that he could have no other religion than that of his master. When 'the good news' was revealed to him, his whole heart melted. He wept with joy at each meeting. There came to him a great love for the

poor and the sick. Not content with the money I gave him for them, he added his own to it, and distributed it in my name. He succoured not only Christians, but all unfortunates, whoever they were. And by the unique ascendancy of his goodness he enrolled troops of poor people in the religion of the God who loves and consoles.

"It was there, above all, that I saw the more than human grace, the sweetness and the purity of Serena. All the virtues which in the other Christians seemed to me sometimes to be united with too much harshness and with too great a degree of simplicity of mind, or sometimes to be spoilt by a too confident anticipation of reward, or by the intolerance that accompanies absolute beliefs, these virtues seemed in Serena the natural fruits of an exquisite and truly divine soul. And my great occupation was to feel the charm which emanated from her person, and to see her living her beneficent life adorned by the rarest moral beauty, the candour of a child, and the pure attraction of a woman.

"'Would you not like to receive baptism, Marcus?' she would ask me sometimes.

"I would answer:

"'Please wait until the bad memories of what has happened no longer trouble me, and my past life is entirely dead within me. When I am completely a Christian at heart, I shall ask for baptism.'

"She contented herself with this assurance, happy, moreover, at seeing me recovering some fondness for life and accompanying her to the holy assemblies.

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"A day came when there returned from Syria, whither he had gone to visit the Churches, one of the chiefs of the Roman community, the priest Timotheus, formerly a slave and of African origin. He was austere, disinterested, and an ardent believer, but very ignorant, speaking bad Greek and hardly understanding Latin. He was capable of

sudden flights of eloquence. But his logic was narrow; he had a poor knowledge of hearts; and he had no understanding of delicate gradations of feeling or of thought; his imagination was sombre, and there was something fierce and bitter in his zeal. His example made me see clearly the irritating sides of a too absolute and too militant faith, and the unpleasant rigour, the lack of intelligence and almost of humanity, which it can engender in certain minds.

"The gentle Callistus had wisely permitted the consul Clemens to take a formal part in the ceremonies of the Roman religion. Timotheus was indignant at such tolerance, said that one cannot serve two masters, and filled the rather weak mind of Clemens with such terror that the poor man suddenly resigned the functions of consul. This was the origin of his ruin. After some warnings, Timotheus condemned the innocent Acte to public penance, because she continued to put on rouge, to wear rings, and to dress with too much care. The good creature told me one day, with torrents of tears, how harshly he had treated her, and I saw that in reality, always hungry for emotions and drama, she took a strange pleasure in the brutality of her pitiless director.

"I had my own turn. By arguments, which I recognized were unanswerable, Timotheus placed me in such a position that I had either to receive baptism or leave the Church. It was useless to explain my case to him; he would never have comprehended its subtleties. To leave the Christian community would have been cruelly to grieve Serena, to condemn myself to see her less often, and to give up a spectacle which was interesting me more and more, and, further, to abandon a touching intercourse with many excellent hearts, with a family I had learnt to love. Although the hypocrisy was repugnant to me, I resigned myself to baptism. After all, the ceremony only joined me a little closer to men whose virtues I admired and venerated, if

I did not share their faith. My baptism would be only a definite pledge of my sympathy with them. It signified that I was at heart one of the little group who, in my eyes, then represented the highest moral perfection in the world. Moreover, Domitian was becoming more suspicious every day, and the Church, rightly or wrongly, expected soon to be troubled. I was bound in honour not to desert my friends in the hour of danger. Finally, the idea that I would give joy to so many good souls silenced my last scruples. I therefore allowed myself to be baptized. And, so as to tell only half an untruth, when reciting the Christian profession of faith, I tried to see in it but a symbolical formula, and I sought to find in it a meaning large enough for my philosophy to accept. If this was cowardice, the joy of my dear Serena saved me from remorse.

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"But time is passing; the executioner will come in an hour, and I must end my confession.

"One morning, not far from the Capenan Gate, as we were coming back from our meeting, I nearly knocked down Parthenius, the Emperor's favourite, because, as he was returning from some orgy, he had insulted my sister by his words. I should have fled immediately, and I thought of doing so. Yet I delayed, I hardly know why, from apathy, from distaste for action, not to trouble Serena, telling myself that there was no hurry, that it would be time enough the next day. But that very evening a centurion came with soldiers. My sister was condemned to banishment and had to leave without delay. The Emperor's caprice being above the laws, I was arrested and taken to the Mamertine prison. I was not even allowed the favour of being beheaded in my own house. Our property was confiscated; the vengeance of Parthenius was complete.

"My sister embraced me gravely, and said:

"'Let us bless God, my dear Marcus. We shall see one another again soon. Do not be uneasy about me. Good

old Athana will not leave me, and there is nothing in exile to frighten me, for God is everywhere. I pray Him to help you in your trial, and I envy you the honour He does you in allowing you to die for Him. . . .'

"She said this tranquilly, in her harmonious voice, ingenuously attributing to me a soul equal to her own. But suddenly, turning aside her head, she burst into sobs (blessed be thou, Serena, for that weakness!). My heart failed me as I said good-bye to her, and I seemed to be already dead.

"I reached the prison just as the ex-consul Clemens was brought there, and we were able to exchange some words. The Imperial decree declared both of us to be guilty 'of superstition and the Judaic life.' In reality he was condemned as a suspect and malcontent, because, since he had resigned his office, he had lived in retreat, and had taken no part in any public ceremony. In addition, his great wealth had tempted the Emperor. The ex-consul's wife and niece were, like Serena, sent to the island of Pandataria. Clemens, whom I had always regarded as a man of very small intellect, seemed to me admirable in his serenity; his placid heroism shamed me and restored my courage. The thought that my dear sister would find friends in her exile also brought me some tranquillity.

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"The jailer is a good man. I have had writing materials on me; he has procured me a lamp. He has warned me that the executioner will come at daybreak. I have written all through the night. I no longer have any attachment to life; and death, whether it be annihilation or a passage into the unknown, does not terrify me. I have almost returned to the state of mind in which I was last year, when I tried to die in my bath. . . . But at the last moment I have a fear of a death which may defile or disfigure me; I have a fear of the axe which may miss its stroke. The science of poisons has made great progress in my time, and the

hollow pearl in my ring contains a drop of colourless liquid which will kill me in a few minutes, almost without pain.

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"I have seen the honours which the Christians give to the tombs that contain the bones of Nero's victims. They will honour me also as one of their saints. But can I undeceive them now? And, besides, what is the good? I should like them to guess at my suicide; I should like them to read this confession; but I shall do nothing to bring it about. For if Serena knew how I am dying, and in what unbelief, it would be too great a grief for her. . . . Moreover, I hope that Timotheus, who did not like me, will only allow a moderate cult to be given to my bones. And if simple hearts venerate me more than they should, what does even that matter? It is their faith that will be counted, not the merits of the saint they invoke. Then, after all, it is not a bad man whose memory they will honour. I have sincerely sought the truth. I have tried since I was a young man to attain holiness as I conceived it. And if I have been idle, voluptuous and weak, if I have done little for other men, I have always had much indulgence and pity for them.

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"I have just broken the pearl between my teeth. Farewell, Serena, my beloved sister! Had the world no other reason for existence than to produce (even at long intervals) so gentle and perfect a soul as thine, the existence of this unintelligible world would be sufficiently justified."

III

THE SCRUPLES OF TIMOTHEUS

Timotheus spent three hours over Serenus's manuscript. The beginning was written clearly enough. But Timotheus knew only the Latin of the people; and the meaning of

the learned language of the young patrician escaped him in many places. The last part was not very legible, and it even happened that the passages in which Serenus clearly affirmed his want of belief were almost undecipherable. It chanced that the words, "The priest Timotheus . . . was austere and disinterested," were easily read, and the end of the phrase was only hieroglyphics.

The old priest was thus confined to suspicions concerning the case of Serenus and his pagan end. He could have entrusted the manuscript to a more skilful reader, but, though he desired to solve the riddle, he none the less feared the scandal of its discovery. For if Serenus had not died for Christ, yet it was because of Christ that he had been condemned, and perhaps, at the moment he expired, he might have had a sudden illumination, an effulgence of faith.

Timotheus then thought of burning the mysterious writing. But a scruple, a respect for death, restrained him. He knelt down and prayed for some time, and placing the parchment again in its case, he went back to the tomb on the Via Ardeatina.

He slipped the little roll under Serenus's tunic, and said aloud:

"Let his crime or his justification remain with him! His writing shall judge him. God, who triest the reins and the heart, I recommend my brother to Thy mercy."

IV

SAINT MARK, THE ROMAN

In the year of grace 860, Angelran, Abbot of the Benedictines of Beaugency-sur-Loire, piously jealous of the miracles wrought in the chapel of the Priory of Cléry by the relics of Saint Avigerne, resolved to go to Rome and seek out the ashes of some martyr of importance, in order with them to endow the church of his Abbey.

Nicholas I., who then occupied the chair of Peter, had a special devotion for the tombs of the holy martyrs. They were, to tell the truth, in a bad condition, having been pillaged and half destroyed by Vitiges, king of the Goths, and afterwards by Astolphus, king of the Lombards. Several popes had caused bones to be transported from the saints' tombs to the Roman churches. But the treasure was far from being exhausted. Nicholas restored some of the most celebrated catacombs, and entrusted their care to sacristans. He often went to celebrate the sacrifice of the Mass in them. One of these crypts was none other than the tomb of Flavius Clemens.

It was there that, among many obscure names engraved on mortuary stones, Angelran noticed the name of Serenus. His epitaph, composed by the faithful Styrax, was this:

MARCVM ANNAEVM SERENVM MARTVR
SPIRITA SANCTA IN MENTE HAVETE

Angelran suddenly remembered that in Nero's palace there had been a captain of the name of Serenus, and he believed that he was gazing on his tomb. This Serenus had been the friend of the philosopher Seneca, who, as the world knows, had known the apostle Saint Paul. Clearly Serenus, initiated by Seneca into the Christian faith, had secretly become a convert; and when Nero persecuted the Christians, he had dared to defend them before the Emperor and to withstand him to the face, and he had been condemned to death. Thus Angelran promptly reconstructed in his mind the martyr's history. He promised himself that on his return he would write it at length, and amplify this probable sketch in the most elegant Latin.

He easily obtained permission from the father of the faithful to open the tomb and to carry off the venerable remains of M. Annæus Serenus, to whom he had already given in thought the name of Saint Mark the Roman.

When the stone was raised, Angelran saw what remained

of the martyr's body—a pinch of whitish dust mingled with fragments of bones, and, on these ashes, the little roll of parchment which, by a strange phenomenon, remained almost intact. He attempted to read the ancient characters, and, being unable to decipher them, he said to himself that perhaps some of his monks would be more successful.

The shrine of Saint Mark the Roman was installed in the church of the Benedictines of Beaugency on Easter Day in the year 861, in the presence of a great assembly of people.

Meanwhile Angelran had handed over the manuscript to the monk Adalberon, the most learned man in the Abbey.

Adalberon succeeded, by dint of toil and patience, in deciphering the sad confession. He thus learnt that the new saint was not, as the Abbot believed, that Annæus Serenus to whom Seneca had dedicated his treatise on *The Tranquillity of the Soul*, but the son of Seneca's friend, and that this so-called martyr had been without faith and had died a pagan.

But Saint Mark the Roman had already become popular and was continually performing miracles. Adalberon, not wishing to disturb the conscience of the faithful or to give joy to the monks of Cléry, did not confide his discovery to anybody.

The reputation of Saint Mark the Roman continued to increase until the eleventh century. About the year 1030, the learned Hariulf, who presided over the cathedral school of Orleans under Bishop Heriger, compiled, from the statements of ocular and trustworthy witnesses, an account of the twenty-four miracles wrought by the power of the saint. I transcribe some of the most remarkable.[1]

[1] In reality these miracles are translated from the collection of the miracles of Saint Faith, Virgin and Martyr, made by Bernardus Scholasticus.—Migne's *Patrologia Latina*, Vol. CXLI.

1. *Of a man whose eyes Saint Mark restored.*

"There lived at Closmoussu a wicked priest named Gerald. This priest had in his house a young man named Witbert, his cousin and godson. One day Witbert went to the festival of Saint Mark the Roman at Beaugency. As he was returning he met Gerald on the road, accompanied by three of his parishioners who were devoted to him. Gerald hated his godson because he suspected him of loving one of his penitents. The wicked priest told his companions to seize Witbert and hold him, and whilst the unhappy man invoked Saint Mark with loud cries, Gerald tore out his eyes and threw them on the ground. A magpie, or, according to others, a dove, took them in its beak and carried them off towards Beaugency. When he saw this, the wicked priest was seized with remorse and began to weep; and thenceforward he no longer dared to celebrate holy Mass.

"Gerald's mother, whose name was Arsinde, having learnt of her son's cruelty, brought Witbert to her house and cared for him. When his wounds were healed, the blind man began to wander through the country singing songs, and he gained an excellent livelihood and was able to be happy.

"In the following year, two days before the festival of Saint Mark the Roman, as Witbert slept, the saint appeared to him and said:

"'Sleepest thou, Witbert?'

"'Who are thou who callest me?'

"'I am Saint Mark the Roman.'

"'And what desirest thou of me?'

"'I have a concern for thee. How farest thou?'

"'Not badly.'

"'And how are thy affairs?'

"'As good as possible.'

"'Canst thou say that thou art content, thou who seest not the light of day?'

"At these words, Witbert, who in his dream believed that he saw, remembered that he was blind.

"The saint continued:

"'Go to Beaugency and buy two candles; light one before the altar of the Saviour and the other before my shrine. I have prayed to God for thee because evil has been done to thee unjustly. Go, and thou shalt have thy sight restored.'

"And as Witbert, thinking of the cost of candles, answered nothing, Saint Mark guessed his thought:

"'Be not disquieted?' said he to him. 'First go and hear Mass at Tavers. There thou wilt meet a man who will give thee six farthings.'

"Witbert rose up, went to Mass at Tavers, related his vision to all who were there, and prayed them to lend him twelve farthings. The people mocked him and called him mad. But suddenly a man of good, Hugo by name, advanced towards him and gave him six crowns and a groat.

"Then Witbert, full of confidence, betook himself to the church of the Benedictines of Beaugency. He bought two candles, lit them, and passed the night in prayer before Saint Mark's shrine.

"Towards midnight it seemed to him that two luminous globes, having the form of laurel berries, but larger, descended from heaven and came to lodge beneath his eyelids in the two holes where his eyes had been. At the same time he felt his head exceedingly heavy and he slept.

"He was awakened by the voices of the monks chaunting matins. He saw!

"At first he doubted the miracle. But, perceiving through the half-open door of the church an ass that was on the point of entering the holy place, he cried to the driver of the ass:

"'Prithee, there, take care of your ass!' And immediately the man turned aside his beast. Whereupon Witbert was assured that he had recovered his sight.

"He spent another year in wandering through the country in order to show himself to the people who had known him blind. Then he bethought him of his salvation, and he entered a monastery."

2. *Of a mare brought back to life.*

"There was at Lestiou, two leagues from Beaugency, an old soldier named Foulque. This man went to Rome on a pilgrimage, and he returned riding on a mare lent him by his brother, a holy priest named Bernard. On the road, the mare fell ill. Foulque promised Saint Mark a candle as long as the animal's tail, if she should be cured. But the mare fell down one day on the road and died. Foulque tried to sell her skin to an innkeeper, who offered him a miserable price. Indignant at this, Foulque broke off the bargain, and then, with his knife, he made a number of gashes both lengthways and crossways on the dead animal's skin, so that it would be of no use to the innkeeper. At the same time he exclaimed:

"'What would it have cost Saint Mark, who cured so many people, to cure my mare also? I had promised him such a fine candle! And this mare was not mine, and I must pay my brother for her. I am a ruined man.'

"As he said these words, the dead mare rose up on her feet and began to neigh joyously. The gashes that Foulque had given her healed up, and in a moment they were covered with hair finer than that on the rest of her body and of a different colour; and it formed a sort of pattern, which was evidence of the miracle."

3. *Of a merchant punished for his avarice.*

"A man from Auvergne had come to Beaugency on a pilgrimage to Saint Mark the Roman. He noticed that candles were sold very cheaply there because of the great number of sellers; and he thought that if he bought a

great store of them he could sell them three times as dear in another district. He therefore bought all the candles he could find and put them in chests. But one of the candles was longer than the rest. This the man from Auvergne fastened against his breast under his clothes, so that the large end was hidden in his hose and the smaller end went out of his collar, beneath his beard. But God could not suffer the insolence of this robber. The candle lit of its own accord and the fire took hold of the beard and clothes of the man from Auvergne. The wretch, howling like one of the damned, ran to the church and threw himself before Saint Mark's shrine, promising to give him all the candles if he would succour him. At that very moment the fire which was devouring him was extinguished."

I think that these quotations will suffice.

In 1793, at the time of the dispersion of the religious Orders, the library of the Abbey was transported to the town hall of Beaugency, and it was there that I had the good fortune to find the manuscript of Serenus, as well as the account of the miracles of Saint Mark the Roman.

(II)

THE WHITE CHAPEL

"Go on telling me, Susan, how splendid the Midnight Mass is; go on telling me!"

It was Christmas Eve. Pierrot's parents had just come back from the fields; the woman was milking the cows, the man was stowing away his tools in the barn, and Pierrot was waiting for his supper, seated on a little stool by the side of the great kitchen chimney, opposite his sister Susan.

He stretched out his hands to the clear and sparkling

flame; and his hands and round face were quite rosy, and his hair was the colour of gold. Susan, very grave, was knitting a blue woollen stocking. The pot was singing on the big fire made of vine twigs, and through the lid escaped a little white vapour which smelt of cabbage.

"Go on telling me, Susan, how splendid it is."

"Oh!" said Susan, "there are so many tapers that one would think one was in Paradise. . . . And they sing canticles, such pretty ones! . . . And there is the infant Jesus, dressed in beautiful clothes, oh beautiful! . . . and lying on straw; and the Holy Virgin in a blue robe, and Saint Joseph with his plane, all in red; and the shepherds with many sheep. . . . And the ox and the ass, and the kings from the East, dressed like soldiers, with long beards . . . and they bring things to the infant Jesus—oh! such things! . . . and the shepherds bring Him puddings. And then the shepherds, and the kings, and our priest, and the ox, and the ass, and the choir boys, and the sheep ask Jesus for His blessing. . . . And there are angels who bring stars to the infant Jesus."

Susan had been to the Midnight Mass last year, and perhaps she believed that she had seen all this. Pierrot listened to her with an air of delight, and when she had ended, he said:

"I *will* go to the Midnight Mass."

"You are too little," said the mother, who was just coming in. "You will go when you are as big as Susan."

"I *will* go," said Pierrot, frowning.

"But, my poor little boy, the church is a long way off, and it is snowing outside. If you are good and go to sleep, you will hear the Midnight Mass in the white chapel, without ever leaving your bed."

"I *will* go," repeated Pierrot, clenching his little fists.

* * * * * *

"Who says 'I *will*'?" said a deep voice.

It was the father. Pierrot did not insist. He was a

very good child and already understood that it is best to obey when one cannot do otherwise.

They sat down to the table. Pierrot ate without appetite. He said nothing, and he was thinking.

"Susan, put your little brother to bed."

Susan took Pierrot into the room that had a floor of red tiles, where there was a cupboard and even a chest of drawers with a marble top; in a frame on the wall there was a square of canvas on which Susan had "marked" in red and blue cotton the six-and-twenty letters of the alphabet, a flower vase, a steeple, and a cat; at the foot of the parents' bed lay a rug with a pattern representing roses which looked at once like peonies and cabbages; in front were the two little beds of the brother and sister, surrounded by curtains of white calico.

When the child was in bed and tucked up, Susan drew the curtains of the little bed.

"You will see," she said, "how pretty the Midnight Mass is in the white chapel."

Pierrot did not answer.

He did not go to sleep. He did not want to go to sleep and he remained with his eyes wide open.

He listened to the footsteps of his parents in the kitchen, then the shrill voice of Susan painfully reading out of an old penny book, "The Crimes of a Band of Ogres." At one moment it seemed to him that they were eating chestnuts, and his heart was full.

A little later his mother came into the room, half drew the curtains, and bent over him. But he closed his eyes and did not stir.

At last he heard them going out, and the door being closed. Then silence.

* * * * * *

Then Pierrot got out of his little bed.

He searched for his clothes in the dark. It was a long job. He found his breeches and his blouse, but not his

knitted vest. He dressed himself as well as he could, and put on his blouse wrong side front; and though his little fingers took a great deal of trouble, no button was in its proper buttonhole.

He could only find one of his stockings, and, leaning against the wall, he put it on inside out, the heel making a large lump, so that the badly stockinged little foot could only half fit into one of the little ashen clogs, and the bare little foot had too much room in the other.

Groping his way, stumbling and clattering, he found the door of the room, then crossed the kitchen, which was lit, through the uncurtained window, by the cold light of the snowy night.

Pierrot was very clever, and he did not go to the door which opened on the street, for he knew that it was locked. But he easily opened the door that led from the kitchen to the stable.

A cow moved in her bedding. A goat got up, and pulling her cord, came to lick Pierrot's hands, crying "Meh!" in a gentle and plaintive tone. She seemed to say to him:

"Stay with us where it is warm. What are you going to do, so small as you are, in all that snow?"

By the feeble light of a window at the top, which was covered with spiders' webs, he was able, by standing on the tips of his toes, to draw the inner bolt of the stable.

Suddenly he found himself outside, in the deep and frozen whiteness.

* * * * * *

The house of Pierrot's parents lay by itself, nearly half a mile distant from the church. You went at first along a road bordered by orchards, then you turned to the right, and you had the steeple of the village church in front of you.

Pierrot started off without hesitation.

Everything was white with snow, the road, the bushes,

and the trees in the fields. And the snow whirled about in the air like a light ball tossed by a weather-vane.

Pierrot sank in the snow up to his ankles; his little clogs grew heavy with snow; the snow covered his hair and his shoulders like white dust. But he felt nothing, for he saw, at the end of his journey, in a great golden light, the infant Jesus, and the Virgin, and the kings from the East, and the angels who have stars in their hands.

He went on and on as if drawn by the vision. But already he walked less quickly. The snow was blinding him. It was filling the entire sky with a padding of cotton-wool. He did not recognize anything, he no longer knew where he was.

Now his little feet weighed like lead; his hands, his nose, his ears were hurting him terribly; the snow was coming into his neck, and his blouse and his shirt were all wet.

He stumbled and fell over a stone, and lost one of his clogs. He searched a long time for it, on his knees in the snow, his hands benumbed with cold.

And he no longer saw the infant Jesus, nor the Virgin, nor the kings from the East, nor the angels carrying stars.

* * * * * *

He was afraid of the silence, afraid of the trees veiled in white which burst out here and there from the immense carpet of snow, and which no longer looked like trees, but like phantoms.

His heart contracted with anguish. He wept and cried out through his tears:

"Mamma! Mamma!"

The snow ceased to fall.

Pierrot looked around him and saw the pointed steeple and the windows of the church, which shone in the night.

His vision came back to him, and strength and courage. There it was, the wonder he had longed for, the splendid spectacle of Paradise!

He did not wait to reach the bend of the road, but walked straight towards the illuminated church.

He rolled into a ditch, struck against a stump of a tree, and left there his other clog.

Across the fields, limpingly and haltingly, the child dragged himself, his eyes fixed upon the light. And as he kept going more slowly, the row of little footsteps which he left behind him grew closer and closer to one another in the white immensity.

The church grew larger as he drew near. Voices reached Pierrot:

"Come, divine Messiah . . ."

His hands stretched out before him, his eyes dilated in ecstasy, sustained only by the beauty of his dream, which now drew closer to him, he went into the graveyard that surrounded the church. The large arched window gleamed above the west door. There, quite near him, something ineffable was taking place. . . . Voices were singing:

"In the plain below I hear
Angels who from Heaven have come . . ."

Little Pierrot went stumbling on, with all the strength that was left in his tired little body, towards this glory and towards these canticles.

Suddenly he fell at the foot of a box-tree hooded with snow; he fell with his eyes closed, suddenly asleep, and smiling at the angels' song.

The voices continued:

"Christ is born in Bethlehem."

At the same moment the soft and silent descent of the white flakes began again. The snow covered the little body with its muslin layer, which slowly grew thicker.

And this is how Pierrot heard the Midnight Mass in the white chapel.

RENÉ FRANÇOIS NICOLAS MARIE BAZIN

(*born* 1853)

OLD CHOGNE'S WILL

(Translated by CHARLES BARRY)

THERE was nothing—unless it were perhaps the silence —to indicate the hour. It must have been that period a little after midnight when even the watchdogs are roused with difficulty from their slumbers. Only now and then, and that at long intervals, from the byre came a stifled lowing, the plaint of an animal exhausted by the heat which the snow-covered roof retained imprisoned within. Not a sound! Not even a light in the big living-room of the farmhouse! Nevertheless, two men were seated there at a table where, morning and evening, masters and servants of the Grange de Beinost ate in common. They sat together on the same side, their eyes fixed on the bed whose sheets and eiderdown, motionless, were yet raised through all their length by a human form beneath. Round the bed, to the right of the fireplace, clothes lay on the floor; others, spread out over the backs of chairs, were drying before the scattered embers now nearly stifled by the ashes. Elsewhere along the walls, as in all the farmhouses of the region, were a carefully stacked supply of firewood, a dresser, a cupboard on whose top were heaped pairs of boots with gaping uppers, a chest, and two or three sacks of chestnuts or potatoes. All these stood out in vague, shadowy outline amid the gloom. The reflected light from the snow-covered fields, never entirely dark, entered through the windows opposite and preserved to the accustomed eyes

of those present a little of the life given by colour and perspective.

At last the men spoke in low tones.

"He hasn't moved for the past hour," said one of them.

"I don't hear any breathing," the other replied.

"He went so suddenly," the elder resumed, "that there was no time to get him to make his will. Still, we can't have Mélanie sharing his property with us."

"No! We can't have that. The meadow and the vineyard down below and the whole Grange must be ours."

"Then you agree with me, Francis?"

"Yes."

"Entirely?"

The younger man replied with a nod and a lowering of the eyelids which meant: "Don't worry! I know what's to be done." He was young, thin, colourless, with yellow hair, an aquiline nose, pale and ever-shifting eyes. Some there were who took him for a person of little judgment, but these were they who had never remarked his short laugh which scarcely disturbed the lips and cheeks, but through which pierced a cunning and resolute spirit.

Anthelme, the elder, a clumsy, bearded peasant, heavy-jowled and flat-nosed, gave an impression of brutal and impulsive strength, but he also possessed a depth of cunning which he concealed under a violence of speech, of tone and of gesture. His was usually the only voice heard at the Grange de Beinost, though the real master was the father whose dead body lay there, and after him the younger son, who resembled his father.

Francis rose first.

"Go," he said, "and fetch Biolaz. I'll attend to the witnesses—and the rest."

A quarter of an hour later the heavy brood-mare, whose mouth, dragged too early by the bit, was perpetually lengthened in a stupid grin, was waiting in the yard under

the falling snow. Francis was standing beside the sleigh. He had one more caution to give.

"Anthelme," he said, when the stable door opened, "keep the bit on your tongue when you are talking to Biolaz."

And shaking the snow from his coat he went back at once to the house.

Anthelme had wrapped himself in a big lined woollen cloak, a miserable garment which had served for twenty years as a covering for every cowherd of the Grange, and his head almost disappeared in the funnel formed by the raised collar. He went forward carrying before him a lighted lantern, which he then placed in an iron ring to the right of the seat, and drove off.

The mountain was entirely white, bare of tree or shrub down to the level of the valley flats, and he busied himself with the endeavour to distinguish amid the shelving slopes the narrow ribbon of path from which he might deviate only at the risk of his life. It was snowing softly. Down below the villages slept in the frozen mist. Not a sound rose from the valleys. Nothing moved in that winter night save, high up on the Colombier, the flame of the lantern which formed a tiny halo round the sleigh as it zigzagged down through the snow-clad fields.

Anthelme Chogne was on his way to fetch the notary.

The Chognes were known throughout the mountain country as a rich family, fond of litigation, and at all times formidable to those who did not serve them well.

"You can never make a good bargain with a Chogne," the neighbours said, "and you are lucky if you don't make a bad one."

The old father scarcely ever came down from his farm, perched three thousand feet up in that part of the Colombier, where the crests became smaller and the flanks of the mountain began to widen. Round the Grange de Beinost, when summer had melted the snows there, were

to be seen only miserable stony pastures and a few unfenced fields whose meagre soil when scratched by the plough or the spade gave wretched harvests of rye, beans and potatoes, but there was lower down on an ancient moraine skirting a torrent a vineyard of tortuous outline which gave a reddish, clear, piquant wine of great renown in the region. This vineyard was the wealth of the Chognes—their most precious jewel.

There was also above the farm, rising blackly, luxuriantly, tree against tree, up to the summit of the chain, a pine forest which did not belong to the Chognes, but which the Chognes from father to son exploited—devastated with an audacity against which the legal owner had never been able to contend successfully. Did trees disappear, nobody had ever seen the woodman who had felled them; were they found at the foot of the mountain in the hollows where tree trunks are carried by the avalanche or the torrent, the Chognes ever claimed that they were theirs, that they came from a cutting which they had bought, that they had been torn away from the edge of their forest. Proof to the contrary was impossible in that vast region, sparsely inhabited, difficult of access, and where not a witness would have dared to say, " Chogne has lied."

Of sombre disposition, avaricious, hard with his own, old Chogne had never been able to bear the presence of a woman in his house. His only daughter Mélanie, stupefied by neglect and insufficient food, had, at the age of fifteen, taken a place as domestic servant at Nantua. She it was who was to be despoiled of the vineyard, and the Grange, and of everything else that her father could have taken from her had he not died so suddenly on that winter night.

On reaching the plain Anthelme had jogged the mare into a trot. He passed through villages, one after another, without a halt, and he scarcely slackened pace even to climb the opposite slope on his way to the pass which connected the Valromey region with Hauteville. The snow

was soft and very deep on the heights, but fortunately no more was falling in this new area. The sleigh glided along a wide road blazed on either side by forest or by clumps of trees. The second descent was swift and easy.

Half-way down the principal street of the town the peasant stopped before a door to which four steps flanked by a balustrade led up, and threw his blanket over the mare, whose body was now smoking like a pool in the morning twilight.

"Come now, Monsieur Firmin Biolaz!" he shouted.

At the same time he pulled the bell rope. A sharp prolonged sound answered him—a tinkling of brass which faded away slowly, and without result. At the third call only did the shutters of a window on the first floor, pushed across the metal sill, send forth a cloud of snow into the night air. A voice asked:

"Couldn't you ring a little less noisily? Who are you?"

"I've come to fetch you to make a will."

"Is it urgent?"

"Yes, very."

"All right! I'll go in the morning. Who are you?"

"In the morning? Ah! No! It's now that you are to come. Everything is ready."

The man raised his voice so that he should be heard in the depths of the alcoves where neighbours slept behind drawn curtains.

"Open, Monsieur Biolaz! The law says that a notary can't refuse a client! Open the door!"

The shutters came close together again. Then Anthelme heard the soft sound of the latch of the closing window. He remained below no longer than a notary takes to light a candle, assure his wife that there is no danger, put on his slippers, get into a pair of trousers, insert within them the ample folds of a nightshirt, and come down one floor.

"Come in quickly," said Monsieur Biolaz, "it's devilish cold!"

"You don't need to tell me that."

"This way," the notary directed, pushing open the door of his study on the left of the corridor.

He went in first, pushed forward a chair in the troubled shadow of the flickering candle, passed round the desk, and then, having seated himself in his usual place, raised the candle the better to study his client. The latter unbuttoned the collar of his cloak, drew out his beard from which dripped a trickle of molten snow, took off his cap and proclaimed:

"I'm Chogne—Anthelme—of the Grange de Beinost."

"Chogne!" the notary echoed, putting the candle down on his desk. "Ah! Very good! And who is ill up at your place?"

"The old man. He won't get through the night, that's certain."

"Very good! Very good!" the notary repeated.

The two men watched each other in silence for half a minute, each trying to read without being read. Their features were equally expressionless—the safety catch was on. Yet, by that sort of direct communication which is invariably established between antagonistic spirits, Anthelme understood, saw clearly that Monsieur Biolaz was thinking:

"All these Chognes are blackguards. We must be on our guard!"

Monsieur Biolaz for his part knew without the shadow of a doubt that Anthelme Chogne of the Grange de Beinost was saying to himself:

"The notary has heard of us. He has a bad opinion of us, but I am cleverer than he is."

This man, still young and chubby, reminded one by his red-spotted face, his lowered lids, the nervous twitching which pulled aside the corner of one of his lips, by his hair cut *en brosse*, as though in obedience to the regulations, by the awkwardness of his gestures, of the proverbial type of recruit on making his first acquaintance with the barrack,

but he had always lived in the region and had plumbed the depths of what he called his "notarial clinic."

"Will there be witnesses ready at such an hour?" he asked.

"They will be at the Grange—all four of them—when you get there. But I——"

The peasant's neck swelled, his eyes became bloodshot, he banged the table with his fist.

"Here!" he shouted. "Will you make up your mind or not?"

Monsieur Biolaz blinked and nodded. Anthelme took this for a sign of fear. The notary said nothing, but he rose from his chair, took from its hook a travelling case which hung down upon the green wall paper, slipped into it scribbling paper, stamped paper, pens, and finally, at the last moment, a rectangular object enclosed in a leather case no bigger than a man's hand, which lay on the desk.

"You know," Anthelme sneered, "there's no need to carry your revolver. The house is safe."

The notary snapped his case shut.

"Pass out first, Monsieur Chogne," he said. "It is not a revolver that I am carrying; it is a little instrument for taking notes when necessary."

Anthelme had not to wait long in the street. Monsieur Biolaz came out, booted, enveloped in a goatskin coat and dragging a fur covering. Without a word he rolled himself in his furs, stretched himself in the back of the sleigh, his writing-case under his head, and murmured:

"At your orders, Monsieur Chogne!"

During the greater part of the journey and until they had reached the foot of the mountain near his vineyard, Anthelme seemed to have no other preoccupation than that of keeping his tired mare at the gallop. The sudden check at the rising ground gave him back his speech. Anthelme half turned round on the seat of his sleigh. He saw by the

mist which was forming in little cloudy bunches that day was approaching and that the morning would be clear.

"Monsieur Biolaz," he asked, "do you know my father well?"

"No, I have only seen him once or twice on market days."

"He will recognize you all right; he has a memory that —but say, Monsieur Biolaz, my brother Francis? Do you know him well?"

"Not at all."

The peasant whipped the already exhausted mare and added:

"He will be there perhaps, and perhaps he won't. He's gone to fetch the doctor—for father, see?"

From the Grange de Beinost a look-out was being kept. As soon as the sleigh turned into the sort of platform which spread out behind the farmhouse, the door of the big living-room opened and a man came forward into the night.

"Welcome!" he said. "Come in! He is not dead, but you will have to work quickly. He is complaining all the time."

The notary entered. The room was lighted only by a stable lantern with bulging chimney, which had been placed in the middle of the table. He saw the bed, but all that he could see of its occupant, hidden away between the pillows and the sheets, was a cotton nightcap, and a vague profile turned towards the wall. A ceaseless plaint came from the bed. The notary went right round the room and came to a stop near the fireplace among the cloth-laden chairs. The bed-curtains were half-closed.

"I am here, Monsieur Chogne," he said. "The notary! Do you hear me well?"

A smothered voice answered:

"Yes, yes. Monsieur Biolaz from Hauteville! Ah! Là! Là! my good sir, I am very ill!"

"Not so ill as you think, Monsieur Chogne—look at me!"

At the back of the room several men's voices were raised in protest.

"Leave him alone. . . . He is ill enough without that. . . . Why worry him if he doesn't want to move?"

The drawling voice of the notary replied:

"Pass me that lantern."

The four words fell amid a silence as deep as if they had been thrown into the morning mist over the snow-covered fields. Monsieur Biolaz repeated them in the same easy tone. Then the man who had met him in the yard outside—a burly man with his hat over his eyes—took hold of the lantern by its copper handle and raised it without leaving the middle of the room. Monsieur Biolaz did not insist, but leaning over, he took a look at the sick man, who in his turn recommenced his groaning, and then turned quickly away. At the other end of the room, on a bench along the wall, three peasants listened and watched, barely breathing, their necks craned forward. The notary's movement caused them to sit up suddenly as if they had been detected in a fault.

"Do your job, Monsieur Biolaz," said one of them disagreeably, "instead of strutting about there in your goatskin."

The notary hesitated no longer. He felt that he was alone against five, for Anthelme came in just then, having unharnessed the mare.

"That's right!" said he. "Bring your papers over near the lantern, Monsieur Biolaz. You'll be better there for writing. We have no more paraffin, unfortunately; we used it all up these last few days, you see."

Then as Monsieur Biolaz began to ask the witnesses their names, surnames and professions:

"A pity," Anthelme resumed, "that my brother Francis hasn't come back for father's will. He will be sorry for it all his life."

The notary did not seem to be listening; he was writing.

Having spread out a sheet of stamped paper under the light of the lantern, he set himself, a solitary wrinkle furrowing his brow, to combining formulæ and weighing words. The witnesses were becoming talkative. They conversed with one another.

"I, Mathieu-Napoléon Chogne," the notary wrote, "being of sound mind, but of ailing body, make this, my last will and testament, through the good offices of Maître Firmin Biolaz."

Monsieur wrote on, carefully noting all the circumstances of time and place, describing the room of the Grange de Beinost, and even the sick man himself, "in so far as I have seen him." Then he requested the testator to dictate his dispositions. Old Chogne, in a voice interrupted by frequent sighs, complaints and fits of coughing, dictated nevertheless a few phrases indicative of a long experience of business. He "demised and bequeathed absolutely and indivisibly to his sons Anthelme and Francis" all that could be withdrawn from the portion of his daughter Mélanie, "in token of gratitude for the care with which they had surrounded him in his old age." He expressed the desire, "which should be sacred to all," that the vineyard should belong to Francis and the Grange de Beinost to Anthelme.

The document written, Monsieur Biolaz read it aloud and then rose to get the sick man's signature. Two of the witnesses and Anthelme stood up together and placed themselves between the notary and the bed. The two others passed round to the alley between the bed and the wall.

"I can't sign!" the sick man moaned, "I can't sign!"

"Still worrying him! You hear that!" the men growled. "Monsieur Biolaz, you will have to put it down that he could not sign. . . . Monsieur Biolaz, don't go near him like that! . . . Don't you see that he is afraid of you? Leave the lantern on the table. The light hurts him!"

The notary was at the foot of the bed, over which was

thrown a blanket which reached down to the floor. The men were moving about on either side of the sick man and bending over to speak to him so that he could not be seen.

"You can't sign, old man," they were saying. "Isn't that so? Say it again. The notary must go away now. . . . You shouldn't worry a sick man like that, Monsieur Biolaz!"

Meanwhile the notary, without being seen, was carefully raising the blanket which was trailing under his feet. He had felt something through the material—something stiff yet yielding. With the toe of his boot he had followed its outline without once lowering his eyes for a moment. Had the witnesses and Anthelme not been so energetically protecting old Chogne they would have seen Monsieur Biolaz grow pale. The notary turned and looked out through the window nearest to him. The light of dawn was bright outside and, reflected by the snow, was entering the room. He drew back.

"I will now add the legal formulæ, gentlemen," he said. "I will put it down that the testator cannot sign. Come, let us finish."

They all placed themselves in front of him on the other side of the table. With his right hand the notary wrote the necessary formulæ, while with the left he fumbled in his travelling case and took from it the little leather-covered box. He placed this on the table.

"What are you doing with that?" Anthelme shouted. "I don't allow that! Prevent him!"

"It is I who do not allow you to prevent the witnesses from signing," the notary retorted. "Witnesses! To me!"

The witnesses pushed Anthelme, still struggling, to one side. Monsieur Biolaz turned the end of the box towards the foot of the bed, pressed a silent knob, and then plunged the article into the pocket of his goatskin.

At that moment the elder Chogne bounded over to the bed, pulled down the end of the blanket which had been

raised, and then, crouching, sought with his eyes a companion to help him in his contemplated act of violence. It would be so easy to throw oneself on Monsieur Biolaz, search him, and tie him up if he resisted, but the notary seemed so calm and so concerned with the business of superintending the signatures of the witnesses, that the eyes interrogated by Anthelme replied clearly with an eloquent wink:

"Useless! He has seen nothing! Don't compromise matters!"

"Fools!" said Anthelme aloud, straightening up and posting himself like a sentry at the foot of the bed.

"Anthelme," Monsieur Biolaz said simply, "the first witness will see me home. Have another horse harnessed to the sleigh."

No one could have guessed, when the notary stretched himself for the second time in the wooden cage which was to carry him back to Hauteville, that he had, in the same hour, discovered one crime and committed another.

* * * * * *

The funeral of old Chogne took place two days later. On the morning of the fifth day the two sons presented themselves at the notary's office. Monsieur Biolaz was expecting them. He invited them to sit down opposite his desk, and himself remained standing on the other side. He had his everyday simple air and his drawling voice, but his lips seemed to twitch more than usual.

"Well?" he asked. "What do you wish of me?"

He had little doubt of the answer.

"We want to know if you have registered the document," the elder replied.

"Because," the younger added, "my sister Mélanie accepts everything that father wished; she will make no opposition."

Monsieur Biolaz pondered for a moment, lowered his eyelids, threw a side look at the wolfish Anthelme, and

another at the ferret-faced Francis, and said, deliberating over every syllable:

"The will has not been registered. It will not be registered. It is null."

"Null?" Anthelme cried, pushing back his chair with violence. "It is not! I've seen it and I know!"

"You'll have to prove that it is null," Francis added.

The two brothers were now standing, gripping the edge of the desk.

"There is the document," said the notary, taking in his hand a sheet of paper which they recognized. "It is null —thrice null! First of all there is this, you see: 'make this, my last will and testament through the good offices of Maître Firmin Biolaz.'"

"Well?"

"Well, the words 'to whom I have dictated it' should have been added. It is absolutely indispensable in law that mention be made of the fact that the will is dictated. I omitted to do so."

"On purpose?"

"Yes."

"You miserable——"

"Wait a minute," the notary interrupted, "before saying any words of that kind. We shall see who deserves them."

"And after that, Monsieur Biolaz?" Francis asked.

"I also neglected to state the fact that I had read the will to the testator and the witnesses, and—third cause of nullity —I wrote indeed that the testator was too weak to sign, but I did not state that he himself had declared the fact."

The sheet of paper fell on the desk, slowly, noiselessly, like a snowflake. Emotion was strangling all three men alike, and their three antagonisms clashed in the narrow space which divided faces, arms, bodies.

"But, look here, Biolaz!" Anthelme shouted, "that is called 'falsification of public documents.'"

"I know it!"

"That sends a man to penal servitude," Francis said.

"Precisely," Monsieur Biolaz retorted. "That sends a public official to penal servitude when he has not as justification this little document here."

He held forward a little brown square of paper.

The two Chognes drew back.

"Oh, you can take it," the notary said; "I have twenty like it and the negative is in a sure place."

It was the younger brother who took the photograph and went over with it to the window. The proof was badly focussed. The bed curtains, the pillows, the sheets billowed in a misty outline round a profile which was typical but indistinct and ageless. In the foreground, however, where the light from the window had fallen more brightly, could be seen under the bed two white surfaces, broad and close together, with indentations at one end.

"I have studied that carefully with a reading glass," said Monsieur Biolaz, "and there can be no doubt about it, those are human feet, the feet of a dead man; do you hear, you two Chognes?—the feet of your dead father whom you had thrown under the bed."

Anthelme and Francis, without turning round, looked at each other, and in that look was the command to Anthelme to refrain from speech, the admission of a moment's confusion. To gain time, Francis began to turn the photograph over, to consider it closely, then from a distance.

"Nobody could swear," he said at last, "that they were the feet of a dead man, Monsieur Biolaz. Nobody could recognize the figure in the bed, it is too small. No, there is no danger for us. Only—people are so jealous. These things would cause a row and people would talk. . . . Look here! My brother and I will let this will drop."

The notary indicated the door without a word. They passed through it. As he saluted before descending the steps from the house, Anthelme turned and said in the manner of one who has a secret to impart:

" All the same, Monsieur Biolaz, you are a good man at your job, and I'm not saying that I won't come back to you one of these days."

" Can you never keep quiet? " said Francis, and dragged him off.

Monsieur Biolaz pushed the door and with satisfaction heard the click of the lock which announced the end of the visit.

HENRI BARBUSSE

(I)

THE BROTHER

(Translated by FITZWALTER WRAY)

THE village of Resat is cut in two by the valley of the Gueusine. Out of the twenty-four pinkish roofs scattered in this lean corner of Auvergne, a dozen pile themselves up on the grassy side of the ravine and the other dozen on the bald side. If any would venture to cross from one bank to the other, the odds are on his losing his footing and rolling from rock to rock down to the bed where the Gueusine extends itself.

It is human enough that the two groups of inhabitants, divided by the gulf as nations are by distance or by the hideous significance of frontiers, do not like each other.

But there are two especially who looked askance at each other across the ferocious cavity where the Gueusine is let loose—Jacquinot and Quinquin. Their houses exactly faced each other. One of the men had a face yellow and moist as mastic, and the other a beaming face, very brightly coloured, which diverted the children.

It was related that a close friendship had united them formerly—one too good to last. One of them grew jealous; that was Jacquinot. From him proceeded the hatred. Quinquin hardly did more than follow suit, and hate in his turn, resignedly—or stupidly, if you like.

So an untiring enmity separated these two people. Their duel consisted in trying to grow richer than the other. That was enough. The success of either affected the other like a defeat.

Luck was equal at first. In the autumn of '92, Jacquinot bought the Etablies meadow; but '93 had not yet shown itself when Quinquin retorted by the purchase of the Mansour slope. Several years later, Jacquinot had not had time to enjoy his acquisition of a cow, a prolific milch-cow, fair and white, when Quinquin became the possessor of an ass called Rémi.

From that time things changed, because Quinquin changed. Former instincts of dreaminess and idleness stole into him. He began by attaching himself to this Rémi, who had coarse grey hair, infinitely sensitive ears, and a look of probity.

The fonder he became of his obscure companion the less vigour he put into struggling, economizing, scourging himself with work, and getting more money than Jacquinot.

The latter, on the other hand, did not lay down his weapons for the satisfaction of his bellicose intent. His rigour and his avarice brought their harvest. When Marie Pesard's corner was sold by auction—it was splendid soil, through having been dunged for fifty years—Jacquinot got it.

In spite of this rude shock, which might have awakened a dead man, a magic spell of indulgent inertia took possession of Quinquin. He smiled at passers-by like a drunkard, or at the ass Rémi like a madman. He talked when he was all alone, or, worse still, he addressed himself to Rémi, in order to make him wag his serious head.

From time to time he went out with no intention of working; and once outside, he would gaze at the fields for no other reason than to see them! He went about the country to no purpose, and it pleased him to find that pollarded willows look like people, all with the same thing to gossip about; that big flights of pigeons, as they rise from the roofs have the movement and the sound of a fan; with other such imaginings in the matter of the woods, and the leaves, and the little animals.

In that way, what was bound to happen came along, in the form of a bad debt, which went on and on, and got bigger and complicated. Dates came round with bills to meet, which he could not wipe out *per contra;* then suddenly —a last one, which could not be wiped out. On the advice of a lawyer, as persuasive as a priest, he had recourse to a little sale. Now, the parcel of land that Quinquin tore away was knocked down to Jacquinot.

What a victory! From across the Gueusine he had got right in among the enemy! It was really affecting to see, as you went by, the enclosure carefully surrounded by a very high fence, in the middle of Quinquin's clover. The latter's little homestead seemed to have been mutilated.

Following that event, Quinquin lowered his head in the street. Then spring came to comfort him, and people heard him one morning singing like an incorrigible bird.

Then it was that he met Léontine—Léontine whom full daylight suits so well! She had hair as fair as the flame by which one keeps vigil; and her bright eyes were of richness incalculable. Quinquin was stupefied at first by the appearance of this passer-by, whom he used to look at and listen for equally when she came near and when she had gone away. Then the world became a beautiful palace specially built around her. One evening she stood still for a little while near to him, looking like a saint. Several evenings after, he dared to murmur a prayer before her. Then a slight blush blossomed on her silky cheek, and the miracle happened that she listened to him.

Yet June had not ended when she disappeared. He waited for her, in distraction, till the day when he saw her face shining and blooming on the other side of the river, on the threshold of Jacquinot's house.

Jacquinot had taken his betrothed from him! The unlucky man tried to compete, to meet him again. But she avoided him; her father interposed and used brutal and humiliating language to him.

While he sought tremblingly to recover the savour of joy, or even only of peace, Jacquinot's luck increased, while his own still dwindled. His face wrinkled, and acquired so mournful an air that the little girls began to be afraid. People turned away from him. In return for his looks, there only remained those of Rémi, whose attachment increased patiently every day. The man liked to put his arms round the donkey's neck, and when the donkey took a step nearer him so that he could rub his head better on his chest, that was his only compensation here on earth.

Protracted, perishing rains in the autumn sufficed to ruin him. All he possessed had to be sold, and as the chastisements of fate never come singly, he took cold, by the side of the empty fireplace, on the very day the matter was decided.

He went to bed shivering. After a heavy nightmare he opened his eyes. It was broad daylight, but there was no one near him. He thought of calling, but as no one could come he kept silent. Besides, helpless and choking, was he capable of shouting?

The deserted man rolled distressful eyes. And lo, the window, insecurely shut, opened, and a dark, unshapely silhouette appeared!

It was Rémi that had come, attracted merely by the presence of his master; Rémi out of his reckoning, ignorant and artless, like the spirit of affection.

The man wanted to say, "*You* will not forsake me!" but he stammered some formless sounds, as one's throat does in dreams; and he fancied he was stretching out his arms to Rémi; and he thought from the bottom of his heart, with all his might, that this was his brother.

Rémi, who was sparing in effusiveness, wagged his honest face and withdrew.

Quinquin died that night or the following morning.

Jacquinot bought his house—a final apotheosis, rather

spoiled, all the same, by the premature disappearance of the conquered.

It was quite a big job to get Rémi away. He seemed to have decided to stay planted there, and he stiffened himself obstinately on his feet. But they tugged him and beat him in such a way that he was obliged to trot where they wanted him to. By the road which descends along the Gueusine, by the distant bridge of Garages, and by the other road which comes back up the right bank, he arrived at Jacquinot's house. On the same day they harnessed him to go to market at Clamarande.

Léontine was laughing with the fame of having a carriage; Jacquinot was feeling pride and joy trembling in the skin of his face.

Husband and wife wedged themselves in with difficulty among the vegetables and baskets. Rémi, being whipped, set off.

But behold! instead of following the road, he turned sharply to the left and shot across the field towards Quinquin's house—you could see it facing you, but it was on the other side of the ravine.

There Rémi was returning, quite straight, quite plainly, in unconquerable hope. In the little carriage, swept away and jolting about, Jacquinot scolded and bellowed, Léontine uttered piercing cries. But Rémi cared neither for their shouts nor those of the peasants who came running with upraised arms, nor for the furiously-shaken reins. With the perfect simplicity of one being who loves another, he was anxious to return to *their* house. There could not have been anything beyond that in the perfection of so paltry a heart.

Jacquinot straightened himself to jump out, but Léontine fastened on him in terror and held him tight.

The carriage reached the edge of the precipice. It happened that the ass, already falling, turned his head towards his new masters, and they had the time to see in his big eyes the shining angel of a soul.

(II)

THE LAST STEPS

(Translated by FITZWALTER WRAY)

TOGETHER, they were a century and a half old. Their ages separately? Neither of them knew. It was so long since they had ceased to make that division in their years; their natural and reasonable habit of being two years older together, every St. Sylvester's Day, was too old.

So many days, so many seasons, so many years had they lived side by side in the low-built farm-house whose roof overflowed like wings. It would have astonished them for a moment had you told them they had not always been married. They each retained something of a shadowy memory, and were more like each other than a brother and a sister. When the village folk saw them strolling, so feeble, and yet so strongly united, they could not help thinking that one of them would soon die, and that then the other would not be able to remain alone.

Winter was unkind to the two ancients. It handled their old windpipes roughly, broke down their backs a little, hollowed their bony cheeks and their ruined jaws. He could see a grey veil before his eyes; she had attacks of dizziness. When May arrived, they felt themselves less caressed by the shade and less bold in the sunshine. Life became hard of living, like the time when they earned it. It was almost a labour to start out from the morning so as to arrive at the evening.

One day when he was sitting in front of the house, a little more motionless than the day before, she went off to get some grass for the rabbits. As soon as she was on the other side of the little gate contrived in the fence, she stopped to take breath. That was the first stage of the journey. Then she went on along the road. From the seat where he was sitting, like a child too well-behaved, the old man's hazy

eyes could not make her out, but he heard the sound of her steps. He shut his eyes so that he could see her going away.

When she arrived at the corner of the main street, opposite the respectable house of the Guichet ladies, the old woman opened her eyes wide, and fell down, with no cry and no gesture, neither in falling nor after.

A passer-by stopped, and a little girl came skipping up. One good-wife and then another appeared. They carried her into a shop, and saw at once that she was dead.

Houses emptied themselves, the shop and its vicinity became black with people. She was laid out on three chairs, and her yellow face, slightly grimacing, seemed like a terrible portrait of her they had known.

"The old man must be told," someone said.

"No!" some voices cried; "not him—his daughter-in-law first. There she is. Hey, Marguerite!"

The woman came up, ugly and timid, with her dress hanging loosely from her scanty shoulders, her cheeks dried and grey as poor bread. Her calling—she was a washerwoman—had boiled her hands, and she swung them like parcels.

When she saw the body of her man's mother—he too had been gone a long time and she was just beginning to forget him—Marguerite trembled from head to foot. Her lips went white and her big eyes rolled in her flat face. She sniffled, rubbed her nose with her apron, and whispered, "Poor old man!"

She turned awkwardly to the crowd, without looking at anybody: "No one must tell the old man, I'll tell him myself." And she made a grimace of entreaty.

Then the black patch of the crowd broke up in all directions, grew lighter, and faded away.

Marguerite had the corpse carried to her own bed. When she had hastily arranged the room, she went to the old man. Seated in front of his house, under the wing-like edge of the roof, he was waiting.

As the wooden gate slammed, he started, and raised his head.

"It's me," said Marguerite. He became again like a statue: "Come, Victor, it's time to go in."

Then he groaned funnily, got up, and groaned again. Upright, he stretched his arms out in front of him and swayed. There seemed to be something shining in his face.

"Well, what is there?" she asked.

"I can't see, I can't see anything at all!" he said.

"Ah!" said Marguerite. It was the simplicity of her soul, no doubt, that made her ready for all great tragedies, for she said no more. She only took the arm of the man who had gone blind at the very moment of his eternal comrade's disappearance.

Dragging his feet, he was led firmly into the kitchen; he touched the back of a chair, and sat down. But his breath came harshly; he sighed, grumbled, and just when she was going to speak to tell him—he groaned.

"They're done for—my eyes! That above all, that!" he cried suddenly.

For several hours he could do nothing but grieve.

In a moment of intermission he asked for his wife: "Where's the old lady? What's she doing, by God?" In another, between two attacks of melancholy, she saw that he had gathered his wits and was waiting for his wife. Then he uttered complaints, gripped again by the fit, knowing only that he was ill and afraid.

Several people came. Some went in; others looked through the window, but no one dared speak to him.

When the day had passed without his knowing the truth, no one else dared come.

From time to time Marguerite left him, and locked him in. She hurried, her face soiled with wiping tears away. She went to see the dead woman again, who was gradually disappearing in the night, in spite of the two candles. Then

she plunged into errands, and making arrangements. She thought of everything, always weary and always running, automatic and heroic, overwhelmed yet insuperable. She knew well enough what had to be done, she of mourning perpetual, she who was so used to surviving!

She was once more beside him when, between evening and night, there came a lull in his grief, which began weakly, and grew longer and longer.

The woman lighted a little spirit lamp and placed it on the high mantelpiece, and thought the moment had come to tell the old man that she who had always been was no more. She planted herself in front of him, as fleshless and as trembling as a scarecrow in a wintry gale. Her head drooped as in shame; and summoning all her strength, as if to shout, she stammered, "She won't came back any more—she can't—she's gone away."

He did not speak. She looked at him then, and saw that he was smiling—and asleep.

She sidled off, and began to tidy things, very gently. Suddenly he moved, and called her. She went up so near that he could touch her arm with his blind fingers.

"Listen, my girl," he said, "come here; listen. The old woman has come back. She's here. I saw her there just now, there where you are. I was asleep, and suddenly I knew she was there. She arranged things, and went away again. I didn't move, and I didn't speak, on purpose. Listen; I don't want her to know that I can't see. I don't want—it'll pain her too much. I won't have it. Make her go away just a little while, until I'm well again. Think of some way, my girl."

He bestirred himself on the old seat, which groaned and seemed to be speaking.

"Take her away. Let her go away for a day, or more if necessary. Tell her—take her away."

"That's good, Victor; I'll see about it. I know. She shan't know—I swear it by the good Lord."

The oath affected the old man, and he said, "You're a good girl," and fell upon religious silence.

The next day she told him an unlikely story of relations who had taken the old lady home with them. He listened in wondering interest, like a very little child. When she had finished, he said, "Then, too, I know she's been back again, last night while I was asleep; I heard her."

"Yes; she came back," said Marguerite, softly.

Thus two days went by. The day after they had buried the old woman the doctor came to examine the stricken man.

"Very good!" he said, against all expectation. "There is hardly any fever, and the inflammation is passing away. To-morrow he will see."

She had taken refuge in a corner, stupefied and shrinking. "Yes. To-morrow—to-morrow——"

Down in her dark soul she repeated, very quietly. "To-morrow!"

To-morrow he would open his eyes, and then, really blind, he would not see *her!* To-morrow, his lowly relation would be punished in her heart for her silence, as she would have been punished had she spoken. It is always so in life. There is always a to-morrow when all ends badly, and the day of peace or of hope that one has sometimes is always only the eve of another.

(III)

FORCE

(Translated by FITZWALTER WRAY)

"—— NINE, ten!" droned the referee through the scrupulous silence.

They carried Phil M'Cue away motionless. Then a huge uproar lifted the roof of the basement room and its smell

of wild beasts, for here—about fifty years ago now—the sensational prize fight had just ended between Phil M'Cue, champion of Australia, and Otis Yerre, champion of the Pacific Coast, and idol of San Francisco.

So the gentlemen amateurs of the 'Frisco ring gave themselves up whole-heartedly to cheering their big Yerre, who had just put M'Cue to bed so thoroughly, after wiping out so many other heavyweights of equal or less celebrity, at the Mechanics' Hall or Woodward's Pavilion.

All the same, and on both sides, there were some experts of the noble art who thought that big Yerre had hit rather hard at the end. M'Cue was a good sort, and a fighter. Brave and prodigally generous, he did not deserve such severe punishment. By the sixth round he was no longer a boxer. He seemed rather a man decapitated, who had had his head put on again and been set up on his feet. With drooping arms he oscillated to right and left, as a baboon does. Then, instead of breathing on him, big Yerre drew back a pace, waited and took aim; and his left arm hooked the queer figure's carotid artery with a force that nocturnal burglars might yearn to have for the persuasion of locked doors.

Naturally, M'Cue collapsed on the ground with a noise of dislocation; and no less naturally he died forty-eight hours later, while still unconscious, and vomiting blood. Thus may a champion act towards those who are rightly called "boiled fish," but not towards honourable adversaries.

Big Yerre continued his triumphant career. A star in the West at twenty-eight. He outclassed all, one after another. Never was he knocked out. Twice he made a drawn battle of it—and more! Four times he did not get the referee's decision. But when one carefully reads again the controversy that the master evoked in the journals of the day, one realizes that in the case of those meetings when his superiority was disputed there were intrigues and dirty doings on which it is better not to dwell.

Ten years, twenty years went by. He continued to be emperor of the ring, the Invincible. He still had his magnificent presence; he carried his huge shoulders like a glorious burden, and his muscles were at least as hard as those of the gladiator who makes his perennial pose in the National Museum.

After being champion of the world, as is well known, for five following years, he only lost the title in the sixth year by his neglect of training. With one voice the sporting Press of two worlds declared that he would have done with Gus Jibson as with the others if he had wished. But he preferred at that date to take it easy.

Then he had enough of being always victor, or never really beaten. Gradually he withdrew, and when at sixty he announced his definite retirement from boxing in favour of running a tavern in New York, our big Yerre was still the Invincible. Never had he bitten the dust of the ring. Always had he been standing at the end of each fight. He had kept himself as superbly upright as a statue that is bolted to its pedestal, the statue of a smiter of men. Glory to our great Otis Yerre from the nation and the world!

The news of his retirement was beginning to get round when J. S. Floyd, the Canadian manager, took the floor one fine day and launched on him a challenge that was almost an insult. The blood of the strenuous champion boiled, and forthwith he besought the indispensable Jim Sharp to arrange the terms of a meeting between himself and the unknown boxer in whose name Floyd had just expressed himself in offensive terms. And the spectators howled with glee—once more they were to see the great old Yerre in the ring!

The adversary who thus forced the veteran to give battle, a young man called Dick M'Cue, was the son of the man whom Yerre had once upon a time so knocked out that only the trumpets of the Last Day were likely to waken him.

At the time of his father's violent death, Dick was quite

young. Later he learned the details of the last fight, and in his childish heart there grew an immense hate for the formidable brute who had needlessly orphaned him, and a stubborn hunger for vengeance.

Patiently, modestly, he trained himself, and avoided the booths and towns where clamorous posters multiplied the name of the accursed crack. He travelled Australia, England and France, which was beginning to awake from its apathy of anti-sport and at last to understand great ideas. He attained splendid and intelligent strength. When he believed himself of sufficient might to beat down the enemy, he went in search of him, and succeeded in bringing him back into the arena by the means I have related.

In this fight—an unforgettable one, by the Thunderer!—the conditions were not fair and equal. The difference in age was too great, there's no denying it. Compact and solid as the old oak tree showed himself, perfect as was the structure of the matchless champion's arms, the fight began badly for him. A great fear crept into the hearts of the good citizens. It was hardly likely, after all, that the antiquated machinery of the old man could stand against such youthful vigour. Was the spotless glory of Otis Yerre going to be spoiled by a knockout?

No! The old grey bear triumphed again! I will not describe to you the incidents of the most dramatic prize fight I have ever seen. But I cannot help mentioning the two on his jaw in the first round that got his adversary "groggy" at once; nor the two swings of the second round —a right on the ear and another in the stomach; nor the finishing blow—the irresistible straight on the solar plexus.

In short, incredible as it may seem, Will Eden was put to sleep like a nursling—he had dropped his real name in view of his avenging intent—and hired himself to a hairdresser—somewhere in the province.

After this fight, Otis Yerre left the rope-encircled stake

for ever. What an affecting scene was the farewell ceremony! Dan Simons, though he had been hangman at Detroit, wept. Yerre made a speech, and we all of us drank for three days as though finally to banish thirst.

* * * * * *

In the clean sunlight of April no place is so pretty as Hockney Hill. There are little paths, as straight as though drawn on paper; glistening pebbles, like eggs of painted china; and turf so fine that you might upholster furniture with it.

A very old man came and sat down in one of the most tenderly green corners of Hockney Hill. Though colossal, he was all broken down, and he wagged an enormous white head that you would take at a distance for the scalped skull of a lion. The prodigious ruin let himself fall on a green seat, and looked at the fields and the gardens with blue eyes that wept all alone in the depth of sockets where one could bury his fist.

His attention was drawn by a little object that moved along the path, and seemed to be drawing near. "He, he, ha, ha," stuttered the old man in amusement.

His eyes, still of use, discovered when the little object was ten paces away that it was a child of five or six years, who held his clogs in his hand as he toddled along.

The child went straight up to the old man and planted himself before him. "You are Otis Yerre?" he demanded.

"My word, it's very likely!" laughed the jovial dodderer.

"Well," said the child, "I'm Bob M'Cue, the grandson of Phil and the son of Jack. And I'm going to knock you out!"

So saying, he squared himself for fight.

Somewhat abashed, the old captain half-opened a gleaming mouth. He shut it again to swallow a painful swing. Then, smack!—he collected a double hook. Painfully he lifted his huge and fleshless hands in defence; he attempted a slow and uncertain reply, but he was mastered,

hammered, borne down by the diminutive descendant of his victims—so thoroughly that he groaned, rolled bleeding down, and lay with his face to the ground motionless.

Very gravely the child counted out ten. And as the ruins of the old man made no movement, the conqueror stood on tiptoe, gave a little cockcrow of victory, and went away.

PAUL MORAND

(*born* 1888)

THE SIX-DAY NIGHT

(Translated by H. B. V.)

She had been there for three nights running. She was always alone except for the dances, which she never missed, but which she only danced with the professional dancers or with girl friends. If anyone else asked her for a dance she refused; she refused me also, although I only went there to see her and she knew it. It was not so much her milk-white back, her jet bead dress which was a shimmering black waterfall, her excess of onyx jewellery, or her long narrow eyes meeting her side-locks and looking like onyxes themselves; it was rather her flat nose, the rise and fall of her bosom, her beautiful Jewish complexion like a sulphur-dusted vine, the odd fact of her being alone. And in addition to this her curious manœuvrings several times each evening towards the lavatory and the telephone.

She spent her money on drinks, not in tipping the head waiter. She went on from short drinks to long ones. Between the hours of midnight and three o'clock on this third evening these consisted of two glasses of champagne, six anisettes and a small decanter of brandy, to say nothing of toothpicks and green almonds.

She went upstairs to the telephone with me behind her.

"Léa speaking. Is your milk good? Everything going on all right? . . . No stitch or anything? Has he eaten yet? Ah . . .? From the bottle?"

We seemed to know one another better in the setting of this waterless lavatory polluted by dead flowers, cigarette

ends, broken dolls, cocaine, assignations and *poudre rachel*. She examined herself pitilessly in the mirror beneath the lamp, so closely that she kissed her own lips. On the mist of the breath she left there I inscribed my heart. She shrugged a shoulder.

She was wearing a bodice on which numerous Chinese officials in silver thread were discussing affairs of state on the threshold of numerous pagodas.

"Any of these to let?" I inquired, placing my finger on the door of the pagoda at each place where the pattern repeated it on her chest. She drew herself up with dignity.

"Are you often taken that way?"

The lavatory attendant, who was wiping her hands on an overcoat, turned round and pleaded for me.

"Yes, you look like a gentleman," said Léa, "but when I'm tight I'm always wrong."

From the balcony, above the up-pointing bows of the fiddlers, one saw a picture of niggers in seaside clothes chewing at nothing and quaking with a kind of religious ague. Twisted copper irises, like offshoots of the "métro," lit up views of the Seine, no longer spoilt by factories, but steeped in romance and in which naked ladies were bathing timidly. Clasped body to body in the waltzing-trough the dancers surged along. The hall emitted an aroma of oxo, addled egg, arm-pit and of *un jour viendra*.

"Where do you live?" I asked her. "I love you."

"Go on! You're kidding. Or d'you mean it?"

"Both together, as usual."

She went on, inevitably.

"I seem to have seen you before somewhere."

"You are my very sister," I said, kissing her dress, "and I cannot live without you."

I must have seemed to her brazen, contemptible and utterly devoid of character. She disengaged herself.

"You seem in a desperate hurry."

"I'm not really, but I always do everything quickly and

badly because I'm so afraid of ceasing to want to do it too soon."

"Well, it's nearly two o'clock. I've got to clear off now."

"Not before you've told me why you disappear every other moment. Are you selling *it?*"

She opened her eyes wide, like saucers.

"Not likely," she replied; "do you think I want five years?"

"Well then, what?"

"It's to get the latest news of my boy who's working."

"What does your boy do?"

"He's a long-distance cyclist, a six-day man. . . . He's in a six-day race, see? Do you mean to tell me you've never heard of Petitmathieu? Where on earth do you come from?"

With a sweep of her arm she enveloped herself in the skins of ninety-eight white rabbits.

"I told my coachman not to wait. Get me a taxi. Tell him to go towards Grenelle."

Along the banks of the winding Seine the taxi clock kept beating like a fevered pulse. Lamps like the husks of pink pearls along the Cours la Reine, phosphorescent sewer outfalls, the girl's dry cough, bursts of affection, resolutions on my part not to have any more nonsense after leaving the Champ de Mars, carts full of blue cabbages.

"I love cabs," I said. "We ought to take one of these cabs and live in it for months until we get to know its lamps, its springs, its tyres by heart. You know, for instance, that the blinds of the Urbaine cabs only pull down half-way and that it is nice to be behind a slow horse when Paris seethes beneath its cloak of mist and one does that which depopulates the world . . ."

Grenelle. The river sweeps beneath the yoke of the bridge. Red lights on the lovers' parapet, green ones on the business men's. Fourteen francs twenty-five centimes on the clock.

I inquire anxiously:

"Don't you live in Paris?"

"Idiot," she replies, "who said anything about where I live? I am going to the Winter Cycletrack for the two o'clock stakes."

* * * * * *

An underground passage led to the enclosure. The cheap carpet over the door was rippled by draughts. When we were half-way through there was a terrific thundering overhead. The boards groaned. Then we came out into a wooden circus connected to its glass roof by a fog broken up into luminous conical sections. Under enamelled shades powerful electric lamps followed the track; Léa stood imperially on tiptoe.

"Look: yellow and black. . . . The Wasps . . . the team of 'aces.' That's Van den Hoven racing now. They'll wake Petitmathieu up for the two o'clock stakes."

Shrill whistles cut through the air. Then four thousand yells broke out, yells that seemed to burst straight from the throat, such as one only gets from a Parisian crowd.

The Australian tried to forge ahead. They were beginning to sprint. Above the advertisement placards I saw the drawn features and eager eyes of the populace. A band broke out. Latriche was singing. "*Hardi coco!*" was taken up in chorus. This livened matters up. The sixteen competitors passed by every twenty seconds in a compact body, keeping a watchful eye on each other.

The weighing-room occupied one end of the velodrome. At each end the track turned, and there it gradually banked until it was as steep as a wall which the racers in their impetus climbed almost up to the words "The Most Reliable Petrol." The notice board began to show signs of life. Figures came down and others took their place.

"4th night, 85th hour. 2300 kilometres 650 metres."

"Look, there he is!" said Léa, "there's my darling getting on to his machine."

So far Petitmathieu was still swinging along easily by himself, with his curled hair, his dirty neck and his eyes as treacherous as those of a cat.

"Isn't he a lamb, considering it's his fourth night, the dear boy!"

The nickelled megaphone announced two stakes of a hundred francs each for the best time done over a given number of laps. The signal for the start of these was given with pistol shots.

"Let's go closer, things are becoming more exciting. Ah! he has seen us."

He had seen me. I was holding Léa's hand. We exchanged a look of hatred as man to man.

The noise seemed to echo in spirals through the length of the building and then gradually to die down. At the signal the sixteen men seemed to shoot round the corners and were hurled into the straight again by the steep twisted turns.

"Léa," I murmured, "I wish that, in the words of that old puritan Agrippa d'Aubigné, we were 'cradled in delights.' What do you like for breakfast?"

The mob was making an inhuman din.

"You're barmy," she replied. "Go on the spree when that darling is going round and round on that track there? Not much. A pretty sort of thing I'd be if I thought of anything but him during these six days and six nights."

At the finish they pounced on the stakes like carp on a crust of bread, the woolly Italian, the Swiss giant, the Corsican N.C.O.'s, and all the niggers amongst the fair Flemings.

"It's all over. The Australian's won. Just like our luck! Petitmathieu let himself be hemmed in," said Léa. "He's going to get off; let's go and see him, the love!"

* * * * * *

The competitors' quarters had sprung up at the small end of the track. Each man had reserved for him a wooden

cubicle with a curtain in front, in which there was a bed. In a slot above one of these was written: *VELOX STAND. PETITMATHIEU—VAN DEN HOVEN TEAM.* A searchlight played on the innermost recesses of the cubicles so that the crowd should not miss a single action of its favourites, even during their rest. The attendants dressed in white hospital overalls bustled about with a clinking of plates amongst the petrol and grease stains, mixing embrocations with eggs and camphor on garden chairs. Dismantled machines, bicycle frames, rubber washers, pieces of black cottonwool soaking in basins. Petitmathieu was lying stretched on his back, his hands behind his head, resigning his hairy and heavily veined legs to the masseur who was patting them to make them supple.

"Do let me kiss him, Bibendum," said Léa to the manager.

Petitmathieu opened an eye.

"That's all right," he said crossly, pushing her away. "Let him get on with his job."

"You haven't shaved, you ugly old thing."

"Oh! shut up!"

Silence fell. The racers passed by us, along the rails, their shadows being thrown on the awning above the cubicles. Their naked legs went round like mechanical toys. Van den Hoven called out as he passed:

"Buck up! to-morrow night's nearly here."

I made Petitmathieu's acquaintance, but he seemed to ignore my presence entirely. He was grumbling to himself. That would teach him to get up again for a bloody stake. And only a hundred franc one at that. Stingy brutes. A lot of touts who came there with their tarts, that is, if they didn't come to pinch other people's girls!

His thighs were now like wet ivory.

"Petitmathieu! Stand up there!" the mob cried relentlessly from above the Peugeot lions. But he made a sign with his hand that he was fed up with them.

The soiled mechanics in khaki shirts with their five days'

beard were binding handlebars with pitched string, making bundles of wheels to be examined, tightening nuts.

Petitmathieu was feeling uncomfortable.

"My stomach, when are you going to do my stomach?"

The masseur pulled down the elastic belt of Petitmathieu's shorts. Below his navel was written "*4th Zouave Regiment. 1st Company,*" with the motto "*All I can get.*" He rubbed him with the palm of his hand.

"Put some talc powder on my thighs."

Those who had just been relieved by their team mates got off their machines for two hours' sleep. Their managers stopped them by grasping their saddles and handle-bars, undid the straps fastening their feet to the pedals and carried their charges with tender care towards their beds.

Then everything settled down for the night. In spite of the noise some of the competitors were snoring. Others got up and ragged about from bed to bed like in a barrack-room. One heard the noise of bicycle pumps being used, followed by that of compressed air whistling through valves.

Petitmathieu remained on his back like a corpse, his hands with their square black nails and thick aluminium rings crossed on his chest. Léa sat herself at his feet and rouged her cheeks. I moved away.

From behind the partition I heard Petitmathieu talking:

"All the same, I told you I wouldn't have you go to Maxim's during the race."

Léa explained that she was too nervy to stay at home by herself. She couldn't sleep. She only thought of him and of his lovely thighs working away so hard, of his beloved face with his black curly hair, his Charlie Chaplin moustache, his square jaw, his eyes fixed on the back wheel of the pacer, his scarlet sweater fastened at the neck by mother-of-pearl buttons. It was not the first time he had been tested. Hadn't she simply *lived* at the end of a telegraph wire all the time he was grinding round Madison Square the year before?

Crushed beneath the weight of their 87 hours of work and 2352 kilometres 580 metres of distance, the competitors were going round in Indian file to the silvery trill of bearing-balls, a negro leading the way. Some of them had put on goggles. Now and then someone had a puncture or a chain broke. Hurriedly his sleeping comrade was awakened and seated forcibly on the saddle; still asleep he attached himself to the others. The round became monotonous as always at the end of those nights which no one ever dreams of leaving except in the state of collapse. A silence weighing tons descended on the assembly.

Léa rejoined me in the enclosure.

"Hop it, or he won't be able to sleep. He's watching us all the time. It drives him mad to know I'm with someone and that he can't leave his bunk. He'll get tireder and tireder and nervier and nervier.

"It isn't that he's got it in for you, he even thinks you're rather a sport, if a little half-baked," she went on; "but he's got it in for me. He won't have me go to Maxim's or dance. He's frightfully touchy."

So I learnt that Petitmathieu only allowed her to go to the Excelsior, the racers' café, to write letters and see people. There at any rate he knew what was going on, from his pals and from the waiters.

In vain I promised her a surprise, presents, complete discretion; I could not persuade Léa to come back with me. I only got her permission to meet her next day at the apéritif hour. I needed her. She described such sweet plump curves and her harsh voice, a delight in itself, enchanted me. All that soft skin smoothed by beauty creams, washed with ointments, all those jewels, all her hidden charms, her dyes, drugs and tenderness, were all at the disposition of those strong, hairy, piston-like legs now resting, rolled so carefully in their blankets. The whole thing was an illogical and yet natural game into which I was intruding as a third party, and which amazed and irritated

me but, at the same time, was the only thing that gave me the strength to bear that cruel moment in which the night-prowler has to confess himself beaten.

* * * * * *

Sunset. Grenadine. The hour flowed smoothly. A feeling of peace crept over everything, in spite of the fieriness of my drink. I was waiting for Léa at the Brasserie de la Porte-Maillot. She came down from Montmartre in a hired brougham, dressed in an otter-skin coat, and drank long drinks.

"This reminds me of when I first knew Petitmathieu. I rented a room by the month in the Rue des Acacias."

My first words were to ask her for news of the race.

"A little tired," she said. "Backache. And colic. But the other leading team has it too. The Australian is done in. Water on the knee coming on. He's chucked it. They've hardly moved all the morning; they're just crawling along."

"And Van den Hoven?"

"Pedals like a demon all the time. But he has no head, no sense of combination. It's Bibendum and Petitmathieu who come out strong when something's got to be done."

I began to realize that my pleasure at seeing Léa again was not an unmixed one. I loved her plebeian hands, her eyelids the colour of a fifty-franc note . . . that cold heart which warmed as if by magic to physical strength, but I could not forget the struggle going on round and round down there.

Drawn up by the kerb the cars of the patrons exhausted the catalogue of strange shapes. There were guns, yachts, bath-tubs, airships, whilst some of them were merely hastily covered with a champagne case. Their owners were those highly-polished and beautiful young men who stand for hours behind plate-glass windows in the avenue des Champs Élysées in tiled show-rooms containing nothing but a palm, a Persian prayer-rug and a nickelled chassis. They

always remind me of the ladies sitting in their windows in the low quarters of Amsterdam.

The waiters hurried about between the tables, holding a black-coloured apéritif between each finger. Mechanics in overalls, cyclists with tyres wrapped round their bodies, pugilists leaving Cuny's. Each man greeted his friends with a gesture characteristic of his occupation. Bantam weights gave each other hearty right hooks in the ribs, footballers slapped each other on the legs.

Léa was still pretty and elusive. The only thing which roused her at all was a yellow and black scarf, the colours of the team, which I had bought specially for her. She wore a large white felt hat trimmed with a single vulture's feather and drop ear-rings which reminded me of the Far West and of the ladies who shoot over their shoulders, aiming in a mirror. I told her this. I also told her that I was not a man like Petitmathieu with "*All I can get*" for his motto, and that I had never wanted anything for six days and six nights in my life, that the doctor forbade me cold baths, that in matters of daily life I had always done "the correct thing" to a dreadful extent, that my heart was an object entirely distinct from myself, and that very thin women with curly hair were not without their charm.

On the other hand, she was enthralled when she discovered that I knew the Italian lakes and the author of "Tipperary," and that I had some autographs of Marshal Joffre. I even boasted of having in my studio an exact replica of an arab chief's tent and of being able to play her Tartini's "Devil's Sonata" on the violin.

She looked at me:

"I say, you're not a bit like other people, are you?"

"Thank you, Léa. It is only women who say things like that to one; and yet it is above all with them that one *is* like everyone else."

The school of motoring near by emitted a fœtid stench. In the distance a hunt could be heard in progress just

beyond the fortifications, mixed with the melancholy hooting of the siren in the shadows of the scenic railway at Luna Park, which is like the hull of a huge steamer abandoned on the stocks of a bankrupt shipbuilder.

* * * * * *

I had to admit to myself with some annoyance on arriving at the race track that evening that I was going there just as much for the race as for Léa; nothing had changed on the announcements. But suddenly there was an uproar. The six racers were going round in a coloured ribbon in which were mixed green, yellow, white, scarlet and orange. By their nimble pedalling they devoured the track worn smooth by their tyres, to the clang of the bell marking their progress.

Petitmathieu was in the saddle; he saw me and gave me a smile of recognition with his left eyelid. Then, towards the 2921st kilometre in the 109th hour an effort was made to get a lead. The balconies groaned beneath the weight of the public surprised during their supper, their mouths full of food.

The negro, his nose glued to his handle-bars, went off like an arrow, and getting half a lap ahead, kept his lead. There was instant confusion. Those who were suffering from the effects of a fall or from aching backs and those whose wheels were buckled were left behind one by one and were soon caught up again. Led by Petitmathieu, the competitors threw themselves in the wake of the negro, who began to weaken and look round: his team mate was asleep and did not come; the crowd yelled to him to come to the rescue.

"Hi, cocky! Boot-face! Get mounted!"

A waiter let a glass of beer fall from the first tier. The hall shook beneath the howls, the rattles and the whistles until suddenly the negro straightened his back, brought his hands to the centre of his handle-bars and "resting on his oars," showed that he had had enough.

I made for the competitors' quarters. Petitmathieu began to dine heartily. Washed, shaved, a fine-looking lad in his cashmere dressing-gown, he was gnawing away at a cutlet he held in his hand. Seated on the edge of the bed, Léa watched him chew, her eyes moist and submissive. He offered me a bowl of champagne and some whisked eggs in a tin that had once held rubber solution.

I was proud of my acquaintance with this athlete whom the programme called "A Caruso of the pedal." I found myself admiring his supple legs, his faultless knees. I assured him of my warm support and spurred him on.

"I led the pack," he explained, simply. "When that happened it didn't take long to break the nigger's heart. All we wanted was to work together."

Petitmathieu amazed me most by his calm, dining peacefully like an ordinary citizen a few minutes after that hue and cry, surrounded now by his assiduous attendants, his adoring mate beside him, propped up by cushions, with a screen decorated with wistaria behind him which gave him the appearance of being in his home.

Léa held one of his fingers tenderly and said nothing. I loved them both equally. I told them so.

We clinked glasses. Léa proposed the following toast:

> To our health which is dear to us all
> And which is so necessary to us,
> Because with health one can earn money,
> With money one can buy sugar,
> With sugar one can catch flies.

Petitmathieu explained his happiness to me: "She's a regular scream. But a good girl for all that. And always ready with tempting dishes, bandages and anything else that's wanted. She's got a coachman by the month who plays the trumpet and knows all about mushrooms. Clever isn't the word for her, and what a talker! Makes a party go like anything. Between ourselves, a skin with veins in it like rivers on a map, a mane of hair down to her heels,

none of those three blobs of hair which women wear nowadays and which don't keep a comb busy. And what breasts! cool as an icehouse; and then going about things painstakingly whilst only putting half her back into it; washes her teeth after every meal, eats asparagus with special tongs and never wears stays.

"Wait till you know her better," he said, "and you'll see what I mean."

The orchestra was playing a boston which sounded like switchbacks. From exquisite heights one was cast into the languorous valleys of the refrains. Some comedians with powdered chins came in after the theatre. They wanted to dance, but the mob treated them as good-for-nothings, braggarts, sausage-eaters.

I left Petitmathieu in high spirits, holding his audience, pretending to be in bed with Léa in his cubicle.

I had to give my promise that I would return the next day for the supreme effort and that I would stay there all night.

* * * * * *

Sixth night, 138th hour, 3864 kil. 570. The same monotonous spectacle. They slept as they went round, like weary squirrels; one of them touched the wheel in front and fell, dragging the others with him. One heard shouts in English, Turkish oaths, a desultory clamour caused by someone giving up the race; then the round began again.

It was very late. The night sprints were over. The competitors circled round, their hands reversed to rest their wrists and wrapped in thick woollen shawls against the night cold.

Petitmathieu was resting in his cubicle. Van den Hoven was carrying out the humble toil of the night, leaving to his team mate the brilliant work of the last hour which was about to begin. I offered to lend a hand to Bibendum, whose face was as drawn by weariness as though distorted

in a spoon. In our shirt-sleeves we put an inner tube into a bucket of water to find the leak in it. Léa found me doing this and reproached me for neglecting her. I shrugged my shoulders.

Many of the spectators were spending the night there. Children were sleeping lying on pink or yellow sporting papers. Orderlies from the École Militaire, private chauffeurs, workmen from les Moulineaux on their way to their factories, clerks on their way to their offices, provincial couples in mourning, yawned, kept themselves awake by playing cards and opened bottles with a pop.

"Ugène," said someone, "pass me the scent-sprayer."

* * * * * *

Wrapping ourselves in blankets, our heads on sacking, we waited side by side for the dawn. Léa took my hand in hers.

"What small bones you've got! I feel I'm going to get into trouble over you," she said, like the heroine of a penny novelette. Her voice was soft and silky. "You're just the opposite to a record breaker. You're more like a priest or a comic singer. You don't say much but you're full of life. And besides, I've always longed to be interested in someone whose health wasn't very good. A young artist, for instance, with his shirt open at the neck, veins much too blue and a fine pointed beard. . . . Take me."

"Nothing," I replied, "could have afforded me greater pleasure, even as late as yesterday. And perhaps to-morrow again. But to-day my whole heart is here; I am a prey to one thought only, and that is that Petitmathieu should win. I no longer belong to myself; nor do you; we have become part of the velodrome, an incident in the race, waiting for victory. A few hours more and just think of the click of the cameras, the crowd, the special editions of the papers, the banquet with its flags and deputies. We will ourselves have contributed in our own small way to our winner getting all this."

"Dearest," said Léa, annoyed, "you're a good boy. That's nice. It's sweet of you. I love you more for that."

Disappointment turned down the corners of her mouth.

She waited. She closed her eyes. Then half dreaming she said:—

"I don't know how Petitmathieu will take this."

On our right, above the advertisement of Éternol varnish, through the glass roof the desolate dawn appeared, heralded by a pianola. I sang:

'Tis the hour of tumbled bedclothes and the dawning of the day,
And the rooster to the rooster hoarsely cries.
'Tis the hour of sweet denials when flowers are cast away,
Yet how strangely, while you sleep, my passion dies.

MARGUERITE SUZANNE MARCELLE TINAYRE

(*born* 1877?)

THE GHOST

(Translated by HENRY ROCHE)

"I HAVE seen a ghost with my own eyes," Monsieur de Cormières declared.

Sitting near the river bank under the lamps, after dining in the open, they were talking about spiritualism and mediums, of telepathy and the black art. Those who were in earnest quoted the names of Crookes, de Rochas and Flammarion, the clever ones made fun. Some said: "It's very simple." And they explained everything by magnetism, trickery, or collective hallucination. Their theories gave forth a sudden flash, like the scratch of a match on the rock near an abyss, and when they had had their say, the mystery remained unsolved. The others reverted to their feeble jokes. M. de Cormières alone held his tongue; when suddenly silence reigned, without any reason, unless it were the vague and growing uneasiness that crept over the thoughts of these odd people, who out of vanity tried to explain or deny the phenomena.

Then M. de Cormières began to speak, and laughter greeted him.

"A ghost! Indeed?—You are sure! The ghost of Algiers, the apparition with a copper head, a curtain for its winding sheet and a broomstick for its backbone. You saw and touched it? What did it say? Had this ghost any sex? Of course the succubus, the female Vampire. Did they exorcise it?"

M. de Cormières, leaning back in a wicker armchair, expressed dissent and contempt by the motion of his cigarette glowing in the dark.

"No, no. I am quite in earnest. You are wrong in speaking of such things so lightly, so imprudently. To affirm or deny requires such courage! For myself I dare not—dare not defy the unknown. Do you realize the power of a word, the reaction of a thought? The priest's formulæ and ritual, the sorcerer's, the mesmeriser's, these are not vain things. Perhaps between the visible and the invisible worlds there exist communications like radiating waves between two stations of wireless telegraphy. But this is only a comparison and no explanation. I would not attempt to explain— I shall only say like Hamlet:

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

"Speak! Tell us quickly!" exclaimed the ladies.

Their forms showed white in the green twilight shadows, and their elbows crushed the fading roses on the table-cloth. And they were already shuddering, thinking that they felt the cold hand of voluptuous Fear between their shrugged shoulders, down their plump and half-bared backs.

M. de Cormières spoke for them, and for them alone; for women are not ironical in the presence of mystery. They are credulous and respectful, because of their intuitive nature, because they feel rather than understand. Their senses, more impressionable probably on account of their physiological weaknesses and the very defects of their sex, perceive, as do animals, certain warnings, certain contacts with the Unknown; every woman shares in some degree the sibylline power, and their bodies, their passive souls, are like abodes haunted by hostile forces.

Frogs were croaking some distance off: the exhalations of the river added to the heaviness of the night air, and the moon crouching close to the river-side among the reeds was

as round and golden as the big eye of a green frog. Now and then a long greenish meteor glided through the sky and silently fell behind the horizon.

"I had a friend," said M. de Cormières; "his name was Gérard Franckel. As I pronounce his name, I can see him now: a fair-haired youth, all nerves, with an attractive pallor, a mouth expressing delicacy and earnestness, and eyes of no particular colour, so clear that they seemed lifeless. His soul, like his eyes, was transparent and too deep to fathom, neither reflecting exterior life nor revealing any life within.

"We were born the same year, in the same part of Morvan. My parents lived in the town. Gérard and his mother lived in an old country château, creviced and mouldy, full of owls and echoes, complicated by useless passages and stairs leading nowhere, by sealed-up doors that had not been opened for four centuries. A single blast might have overthrown this dilapidated old house, and yet it still stood, held together by the clinging rootlets of dark ivy, and bearing the conical roofs of its two turrets like pointed, tilted hats. Round about were some low-lying meadows, a farm and forests, dense bluish forests that coloured with different tints the undulating ground as far as the highest mountainous crest. In these forests there stood on end, as if by miracle, a kind of menhir, a conical rock, that could be made to move a little if pushed in a certain way; it was called the Revolving Stone.

"The name of this rock had been extended to that of the estate and to the name of my friend's little castle; it was very appropriate, as all the stones in this miserable building could revolve.

"After finishing his studies and his military service, Gérard never left the house again. There he led the studious life of a Benedictine monk, combined with the rough pursuits of a country gentleman, always hunting, riding or reading, never associating with others, but playing the

violin in the evening to amuse himself. He confessed to me one day that the occult sciences would have attracted him if he had had more leisure, more fortune and more genius. At the time I paid no attention to this confidence. Gérard was a rather eccentric, misanthropical and probably selfish individual, but he was not hot-headed, and still less was he given to crazy notions. A simple and regular life seemed to keep his mind and nerves well balanced. He loved solitude, but it was a laborious solitude. Besides, he was not left quite to himself. His mother, an excellent woman of limited capacity, was ageing by his side, occupying her time with her devotions, surrounded by sickly dogs, dying cats, and servants in poor health. Franckel was never tired of attending to her wants, and was not disgusted by the venerable and ill-smelling menagerie that filled the passages and the drawing-room.

"I left the country and travelled; Franckel sometimes wrote to me; then came a silence, a temporary neglect. Our friendship as children was not dead; but, deprived of the necessary warmth which habitual intercourse keeps up, it had fallen asleep, and like a marmot it was hibernating. Now and then, however, I remembered the Revolving Stone, the drawing-room with its mahogany furniture, its green silk hangings with a crown pattern, the old dogs and cats lying on the carpet, Madame Franckel in her sphinx-headed armchair, and my friend Gérard, so fair, pale and peaceful, holding a book, with another in his pocket, and near him a music stand.

"One day my aunt Lepreux, of Avallon, informed me that Gérard was married. His wife was a young German girl who had acted as governess at the château of Belleroche.

"He had met her by chance, while she was searching for plants in the woods, with her little pupils. She was well bred, a good Catholic, and an accomplished musician. My aunt praised her freshness, her blue eyes, her fair hair, her timid reserve, her love of solitude and of a simple life.

"After the wedding the couple were to visit Mademoiselle Elizabeth's country, staying for a few weeks in the Black Forest. Old Madame Franckel would not interfere with this fine project, as she had let death take her the preceding winter, the poor, good woman!

"I wrote to congratulate Gérard: he forgot to reply. 'He is happy,' thought I, and I excused his negligence. Henceforth, however, I never failed, out of curiosity, to ask my Avallon aunt for news. I learned but little through her: the couple's return, their determined solitariness, and, less than a year after their marriage, the death of young Madame Franckel. I wrote Gérard a letter of condolence, that remained unanswered, as well as the first. And time went on.

"Three years later, while a secretary at the Berne Embassy, I was returning to my post after a holiday, when I fancied a few days' stroll in the Black Forest.

"It was the time of transition from winter to spring, that whimsical, irregular season, with its daily caprices; the childish season commencing with the first snowdrop in February and ending with the first violet in March.

"Tourists did not yet intrude on the beautiful expanse of glittering snow, nor on the sombre fir plantations where the underground tribe of gnomes guard the secret homes of springs and treasures. It was the old, legendary Germany, the Germany of the brothers Grimm. Everywhere I thought I would come across the presumptuous woodman, the bold little tailor, the hook-nosed, bearded Jew of the ancient stories.

"My soul was as inclined to reverie and as tender as a Schumannlied on the evening when I entered the delightful little town called Frieburg-im-Breisgau.

"The setting sun cast a purple tint over the cathedral, built of red sandstone, which stood out, powerful and elegant, on the wooded background of the Schlossberg. The light played through the open fretwork on the high spire, and the green roofs of very old houses shone like Delft toys.

Painted friezes—ornaments and flowers—decorated the windows under the eaves of those pretty roofs, looking like bands cut out of some old Persian fabric.

"Strolling, musing, I wandered about the tidy streets where every other shop is a hairdresser's, a confectioner's, or a pork-butcher's. I admired the little piazza of the Lime, the charming fountains, the town hall painted in fresco and adorned with symbolic sirens.

"Meanwhile the brilliant sky had darkened, and I was going back to my hotel, when I passed for the second or third time before the cathedral porch. Another traveller had stopped there. He was taking leave of the stout, smooth-faced beadle who had conducted him round the church, and I recognized by his accent that he was French. He was walking slowly round the porch, examining the sculptured figures, the wise and foolish Virgins, the nude Eve, the plump-templed Virtues, with their curled lips, their eyes expressing either a doubtful archness or a joyous artlessness.

"Among these statuettes, sisters of the statues we see in the Bâle and Strasburg cathedrals, the 'Prince of this World' appeared in his glory, young, handsome and voluptuous. Indifferent to the hidden vipers that were gnawing his loins under his cloak, he was offering to the Virgins he tempted, and to the Eve he seduced, the apple of knowledge and voluptuousness. The French traveller remained motionless before this statue. He looked round, and my name, Cormières, muttered rather than pronounced, made me start.

"It took me a few seconds to recognize this man who pressed my hands and spoke in a tremulous voice—Franckel! It was Franckel. I could not see him distinctly in the dusk; but how changed he looked, worn and aged by grief.

"'I am not surprised,' he said, as I exclaimed, congratulating myself on my good luck; 'I had a forewarning of

your presence. Yes, just now, while gazing at these stone figures, I remembered our visit to Vézelay, and your image came before me with extraordinary vividness. On turning my head I saw you.'

"'That's telepathy,' I said laughingly.

"He repeated without laughing:

"'It is telepathy indeed.'

"At last he apologized for his long silence.

"'I was too happy at first—then too miserable. I am now repeating my late journey with Elizabeth. It seems to me like following her dear shade in this country that was hers, and which I loved.'

"He spoke of Her, quite naturally, without any passion in gesture or voice, but with deep and restrained sorrow.

"She did not suffer. She died from a sudden heart seizure one evening when the moon was shining and the breeze blowing gently. Seated at the piano, she was playing a sonata of Mozart, while Franckel was at the window enjoying the smell of the newly-mown hay. Her young life passed away with the vibration of a chord in the minor key while her dying fingers held the last note long, too long, beyond the time indicated in the music. Then followed eternal silence."

"'Nevertheless,' said Franckel, 'I have been able to survive her. A hope has sustained me—almost a certainty. But no! You would laugh—you would prove to me logically, scientifically, how absurd the idea is. You would say to yourself: He's mad!'

"'Take care,' I retorted, pointing to the painted statue with the insolent smile. 'He also was possessed of great knowledge. He it is who offers you the deadly fruit of knowledge and whispers: *You will be like God.* Disturb not the peace of the dead, Franckel, look not beyond this life. Beware of too great a curiosity.'

"'Thanks for your sermon,' he replied sarcastically. 'You take me for a good little country cousin, religiously

minded, whose head has been somewhat turned by grief. Do you know that I have had a talk with Claymore this very morning?'

"'The Scotch doctor, Crooke's rival? I know he is here.'

"'We are at the same hotel. I have seen him, I have seen his medium, Mademoiselle Sylvia, whom he is taking to the Congress of Spiritualists at Rome. You shake your head and laugh! That's easy. But if you saw with your own eyes . . .'

"'What?'

"'The phenomena you deny, because you cannot explain them!'

"'Would Claymore consent to the presence of a sceptical witness?'

"'He will. He's an honest man, incapable of trickery.'

"'Oh!'

"'Come, you *must* come!'

"He dragged me away. I followed him with pity, with repugnance, yet with a devouring curiosity. A cold night enveloped the town and the sharp outline of the gables seemed to cut into the ruddy and veiled disc of the moon.

"Dr. Claymore was staying at the Hotel X.

"'Let us await him in the dining-room,' said Franckel. 'There is nobody there to-night, and for a consideration I have been promised that we shall be left alone. Look! What curious furniture!' I half closed my eyes, dazzled by the light and by the graceful gaudiness of the rococo decorations contrasting strangely with the austere shadows of the Gothic architecture without.

"The large room, with its white wainscoting, enriched by little columns, adorned with gilt wood, beading and fleurons, was resplendent under the hundred candles of a chandelier from which hung crystal pendants.

"Between the tables, little orange trees in boxes, circular-clipped like globes of verdure, reminded one of those at Versailles.

"An inlaid harpsichord with delicate paintings stood in a corner.

"'This is no furniture for ghosts,' I said to Franckel. 'What ghost would venture among these vestiges of the sceptical century? Perhaps Hoffmann's Don Juan, or the beautiful Antonia, or Coppelius's doll.'

"'Don't laugh too soon, sir,' said a quiet voice next to me. 'Last night I saw, just where you are standing, the Dauphine, Marie-Antoinette, fair and powdered, looking rather thin in her wide hooped dress of silver cloth. I will show her to you this very night if she deigns to reappear. She was only a girl of fourteen, already affianced and married by proxy, when she stopped for a day at Freiburg, on her way to France. This room pleased her, recalling pleasant memories of her childhood. But what, Monsieur Franckel, you are jealous? I shall not call the Dauphine to-night, I assure you. And besides, we have Sylvia's humour to consider.'

"'Doctor,' said Gérard, 'allow me to introduce M. de Cormières, a friend of my young days. Dr. Claymore, who is kind enough to be my guest. Where is Mlle. Sylvia?'

"'She is resting. She must regain strength.'

"We sat down. I asked myself what I was doing at that table, between two men of whom one at least was mad. Dr. Claymore was of mature age, with rusty grey hair, piercing eyes and gentle voice. His slight accent was not disagreeable. He did not look like a humbug or a lunatic. And yet! . . .

"The doctor's presence had enlivened Franckel. In spite of his pale and over-sparkling eyes, the premature wrinkles of his temples, and his ashen, silvery hair, I recognized the youth of former days, the singular lord of the castle of the Revolving Stone.

"We chatted while we drank the dry and golden wine called *Liebfraumilch*.

"Claymore repeated the stories about telepathy and materialization, popularized by Crookes and Flammarion, which we have heard just now. His earnestness, sincere or simulated, was winning Franckel over, and I myself, somewhat upset by the surroundings, the Rhine wine, and the odd conversation of these two victims of delusion, fell a prey to some secret mental contagion.

"The candles of the chandelier were half consumed, the table had been cleared, and the servants had retired, as ordered by the doctor, when a woman entered the room. It was Mlle. Sylvia, a professional medium, specially attached to Dr. Claymore. She was no longer very young, but she was pretty, with large Slavish-looking eyes; she had a weary smile and most beautiful hands. Her black dress, of shadowy, soft material, swept along like the dark foam of a river of Hades. She wore a few white daffodils in her belt. Such a symbolical costume displeased me at first; but the woman's voice, her look, the sad charm that emanated from her, suddenly intoxicated me more than the wine.

"'Are you ready, Sylvia?' asked Claymore

"'Yes, I am. I have slept a little,' she replied, passing her fine hands over her forehead And she added:

"'Last night the Spirit quite broke me up.'

"Franckel, very pale and stammering, attempted to question her, but the doctor forbade him to speak.

"He warned us that the mesmeric state is a terrible one, sometimes causing death, and always full of mysterious dangers; that the medium lends its strength and its very substance to the wandering soul, which is thus enabled to accomplish the phenomenon of materialization.

"'Sylvia is nearly exhausted,' he concluded; 'we must treat her with caution.'

"She smiled, as she listened, like a willing victim.

"Franckel had opened the harpsichord: his fingers skimmed over the yellowish keys. A musical shiver passed

over my excited nerves and made them vibrate like the strings of a violin. The doctor, standing on a table, put out all the candles of the chandelier, one after the other. Franckel had again come to sit by me.

"The room was nearly dark. A feeble ray of moonlight slipped through the carelessly drawn blinds, touched the keyboard, and traced on the waxed floor a track of vapoury light. The air was becoming heavier, it felt almost stormy, changed with unknown fluids; and the sensation of something supernatural, gradually invading my consciousness and my will, overpowered all the appeals of reason and gave me that feeling of horror that frightens children in the dark. I wanted to scream, to get up and run away. But I remained silent and did not stir.

"Mlle. Sylvia was seated in the middle of the room, ten paces from us. Her dress dissolved into the darkness. We could only distinguish her paleness, and that of the daffodils, and almost without seeing her we felt that she was shaken by an imperceptible trembling, which increased until it became a shiver. Claymore adjured the Spirit to manifest itself.

"'Oh my sister,' he implored, 'oh my sister, who art freed from material bonds, assume for a moment thy earthly form. Evoked by faith, called forth by love, come, Elizabeth, to the one who loves thee . . .!'

"A cold, light breath, which was not the wind outside, nor the draught through the door's joints, an indefinable breath made our hair stand on end. The medium fell into a kind of convulsion and Gérard groaned:

"'Oh! the harpsichord! Mozart's sonata!'

"'She is coming!' said Claymore, holding out his hand towards the medium, who remained motionless, as in a trance.

"I am telling you sincerely what I saw—or thought I saw. In the moon's ray a tall, soft, vague form was taking the shape of a woman.

"It lasted only a moment. I had stepped back, but Franckel rushed forward:

"'Elizabeth! thou callest me! Give me thy hand—I must follow thee.'

"He stretched out his arms, tripped against the harpsichord, and the thud of his fall awoke me. I regained consciousness. The music had ceased; the amorous shade of the departed had melted into the ray of moonlight. I ran and lit the candles.

"Claymore left the medium in her trance to assist me in lifting Franckel up. He breathed no more. I knocked at every door asking for help. The proprietor of the hotel and the servants came bringing vinegar and salts. Everything proved useless. Franckel was dead, and his staring eyes still expressed his rapture and unearthly happiness.

"'His heart was weak,' said Claymore. 'He died like his Elizabeth. Do you pity him?'

"I agreed that Franckel was no longer to be pitied. . . . He had died of joy, an exquisite and rare way of dying. Nevertheless, this adventure was a source of serious vexation to the Scotch physician and myself.

* * * * * *

"There is the story," said Cormières; "it is authentic if not likely."

"And after such an experience you have not become a spiritualist?" inquired the youngest of the ladies, dressed in white, the most credulous and happiest, who had most enjoyed being afraid.

"No, madame, I was too over-excited by the conversation, the poetical surroundings, the *Liebfraumilch* and Mlle. Sylvia's beauty to attach any real importance to the testimony of my senses. Claymore was a great mesmerist: he may have hypnotized us into believing that we heard the sonata and saw the shade of Elizabeth Franckel. But that also is only an hypothesis. I am simply relating, without explaining or trying to prove anything."

Silence ensued. Frogs croaked in the distance. The moon, higher in the heavens, was grinning ironically, the mocking river rippled along outside.

"Your absurd romance has made me quite nervous, Cormières," said our hostess, draping herself in a fleecy scarf. "I shall dream of ghosts to-night. Let us change the subject, gentlemen."

PIERRE HAMP

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(I)

AT THE CHEVALIER RESTAURANT

(Translated by James Whitehead)

At the Chevalier Restaurant men with muddy feet shouted down into the area for the dustbin. Two scullions, with dishcloths around their necks, appeared, and lifted it according to their daily habit on to the wheel of the garbage wagon. The early risers of Paris walked briskly down the boulevard, for the crispness of October was in the air; they were hurrying to get to their jobs at seven o'clock. The valuable leavings from the restaurants were being carried up from the basements; skimmings and greasy water, worth five francs a barrel, were poured into metal containers on the wagon of the bone-dealer, whose horse was rubbing noses with the placid mare of the Little Sisters of the Poor. These nuns, in their black robes and hoods that swelled out as they went rapidly about their business, received crusts of bread, coffee grounds, and the little bits of meat left on the clients' plates. The proprietor's reputation for benevolence was further enhanced by a daily queue of hungry souls, amongst whom the waiters distributed scraps.

They waited quietly in the empty restaurant, with its mirrors and white cloths laid for the next meal, the remains of which would be theirs. A woman, weary with carrying her baby, stood in the line, and her back was as round as a wet-nurse's bosom.

The two scullions started off to get their allowance of white wine, as cold as the morning itself, but they were stopped by two young men, who laid hands on their

shoulders, and replied to the friendly good-mornings in a strong Auvergne accent:

"We're clean broke, and not a smell of a job!"

The two scullions got out drinks for the two jobless cooks. The humility of poverty caused these men to forget the difference between their callings, and the cooks were glad to discuss with the scullions the very absorbing question of where to get work. They complained of the great number of unemployed, and of the difficulty of getting placed after returning from summer jobs:

"There's a lot of misery in the winter in Paris."

"A steady job's a lot better than workin' by the season," declared one of the scullions.

Baugalois, called Steel-Shavings because of his curly hair, made some reservations:

"By the year you don't have to worry, but the pay's bad. At Maire's the chefs get two hundred francs a month; the assistants, seventy to eighty. At Ledoyen's, the chefs three hundred; the assistants, ninety to a hundred. I'm just back from Trouville, assistant sauce-maker, two hundred, laundry and fare paid."

Jandet held forth, with a Gascon accent:

"If you travel you learn yer job better. Ouvrard's sauce-makers, now, what can they turn out? Fillets of sole with mussels and shrimps: the dish of the house. Got to keep movin' or you'll get stale."

The two scullions, who washed dishes, disapproved of these high-sounding arguments:

"Ye're always spittin' yer guts if you work by the season. You don't get no rest at all."

Jandet put in sarcastically:

"And I s'pose there ain't no place like that in Paris?"

The elder of the scullions informed them:

"There's two jobs goin' here. An entremets-cook and a larder-man near scratched each other's eyes out yesterday. I guess they've got the sack by this time."

Baugalois and Jandet finished their wine, and having thanked the scullion for this information, they set off on their round again. Their dragging steps betrayed the fact that they were out of work, and their faces, pale from constant proximity to the fire, distinguished them from other workmen who passed their days in cool work-rooms. The stream of busy people flowed past them.

A slow procession of fruit carts filled the Marché Saint-Honoré as the two entered the Benefit Society of their Association, where there was an employment office. The odour that clung to the clothes of the men waiting near the door of the office proclaimed their occupation; it was the same odour that rises from the basement windows of a restaurant. The summer season had just come to an end, and Paris, the great centre of employment, was full of them.

The hope of a day's work as extra help, especially on Sunday when people generally dine at restaurants, enabled them to wait patiently near the office. The pay for a chef was ten francs, for an assistant, five, food included; and those who did not come in for these little windfalls got angry with the manager and accused him of favouritism, but never to his face, even though they had paid their Association fee of three francs regularly every month.

There are few revolutionary spirits amongst the members of these associations; permanent distress only occurs in the case of old men, who have been given the sack on account of their age. The young ones, devoted to their work and the earning of their living, have the ambition to be chefs one day, and they look forward to the possibility of a little income at the age of forty-five.

The minds of many are absorbed by the search for a nice place in a private house, where the work is easy and brings them peace and quiet. Men who require more excitement stay in the restaurants, and feed their temperaments upon the noise and bustle which are impossible for a private servant. These men know what it is to be hungry.

Accents from every part of France can be detected in the speech of these wanderers, but the *merde alors* of the department of the Seine is heard most often. Men arrive from abroad, linguists now by virtue of " thank you " or " grazie." Weighed down by the future's uncertainty, they wait patiently, with their cold feet in shoes that cannot shine because they are covered with grease.

Most jobs were fixed up in the bars. Rather than trust to the manager of the Association, the chefs chose their own assistants. At the marble-topped tables cards were played and white wine was drunk until ten o'clock, then apéritifs until noon, in order to keep in the good graces of the proprietor, who soon greeted M. Montchanin with a cordial hand-shake. M. Montchanin was chef at Chevalier's, at a salary of eight hundred francs a month, and he and the proprietor of the bar came from the same province. This latter gentleman, whose stomach had too long been the prey of " What'll you have? " was very anxious to please Baugalois and Jandet, who were sitting at a table near the door, lettered WINES—LIQUEURS, for there were nineteen white wines, six absinthes, and eleven black-currant cordials chalked up against them.

He advised M. Montchanin to engage them, to replace the two he had sacked with a week's pay the day before.

" Two good little fellers; quiet and never thirsty. White wine in the morning, apéritif at noon, then coffee and a few glasses of beer. They never get drunk."

M. Montchanin looked at their certificates, and said he would take them at ninety francs a month, Baugalois as entremets-cook, Jandet as larder-man. The proprietor wished them good luck at the chef's expense:

" What'll you have? "

From the cupboard they got their bundles, which looked like galantines: white jacket, slippers and knives; and they started out briskly towards Chevalier's.

To other young men who came to drink white wine there, the proprietor offered encouragement:

"It'll be your turn soon."

Someone congratulated them on having missed the Chevalier job:

"Oh, that hole! Boiled beef every day, and not enough o' that to fill yer guts."

M. Montchanin had been decorated by the Agricultural Society for his interest in the yearly Culinary Exhibition. His weakness for honours of this sort had now plunged him into the engrossing management of a Benefit Society. Other dignitaries of the Association got as far as the Legion of Honour, when they became rich and could get what they wanted.

Baugalois and Jandet went down into the kitchen of the Chevalier Restaurant. Men in white jackets were busy round the stoves and the heavy wooden tables, preparing for the midday meal. An assistant larder-man brought twelve chickens to the roaster, perspiring before his spit, then he showed the two new arrivals where to put their things: a tiny windowless room lit by electricity. The smell of cooking, confined in this place, was so strong that even those accustomed to it had difficulty in breathing.

Baugalois and Jandet put on their jackets and caps, grasped their knives, and moved silently across the sawdust-covered floor in slippered feet: Baugalois to his stove, and Jandet to the refrigerator room.

The head entremets-cook threw some beans into boiling water to bleach, shook hands with his new first assistant, and gave him a clean apron and two clean dishcloths; these articles would be supplied to him every Thursday and Sunday.

Baugalois looked spotlessly clean beside the second assistant, whose apron was black with three days' use. While wiping off the table with a damp cloth, he explained to the newcomer how to lay the things out: where to put the spice-

box, the string basket, and at which corner of the stove to place the steamer for soups. Then he began to pull his leg:

"Know how to make an omelette in a salad-basket?"

Baugalois was afraid that his ability would not display itself immediately in this new place, and that he might hear that terrifying phrase:

"Is there anything you *can* do?"

The howler, who received the orders from upstairs, yelled:

"*Un maquereau à la Boni de Castellane!*"

The sauce-man answered for the first courses, and the roaster for the roasts, the grills, and the fries. The heaviest burden fell upon these men in the basements at meal hours, for it was then that the fires were hottest. The red surface of the stoves produced a terrific heat, and the stifled cooks poured with perspiration, but their agility was astonishing. Little dry clouds of sawdust followed their rapid footsteps. Each one kept his temper until some one bumped into him, and then the oaths broke forth with force and promptness.

The howler yelled to the entremets-cook: "Mush for the dog!"

"Oh, hell; I forgot the brute!" was the angry response.

The second assistant darted after a brass casserole, and plunked it down on the stove; into it he put the soft part of a loaf of bread and some consommé, and then, with a swift movement, forked out the bread and brought the consommé to a boil.

The head entremets-cook, rapidly buttering some vegetables, explained to Baugalois:

"Every day at noon: a panada with consommé and chopped meat. The brute belongs to a harlot. First-class references!"

He shouted to the larder-man:

"Meat for the dog!" And Jandet emerged briskly from the cool room, where one's cheeks stayed pink.

The howler grumbled:

"Go get your mush, *my pet!*" Then he told Baugalois:

"Here's a customer to look after. A hundred sous a day for a dog! No bones and chopped very fine! No grease!"

Baugalois accomplished this little job easily, but he whispered his indignation to the second assistant:

"It's a damn shame! I've been starving for two months; there's been plenty o' days when I didn't eat nothin'. A hundred sous for a brute of a dog, and I know lots o' poor devils who ain't got fifteen."

The second assistant agreed heartily:

"We gets boiled beef, and that brute laps up the broth."

Clearing his throat with a cough, he spat copiously into the casserole.

"Eat that. There ain't no bones in it!"

Baugalois lessened his indignation by contributing in a similarly outrageous manner to the nourishment of the pampered animal. Thus their injured sense of justice was avenged.

(II)

THE FRIED-POTATO SISTERS

(Translated by James Whitehead)

Martha Rondefrite was fifteen years old, and she worked at home. She wanted as many working hours as possible, so she did hardly any cooking, and bought things from the pork-butcher. Two sous' worth of fried potatoes for each person was always ordered, according to the family custom. Sometimes her eighteen-year-old sister Georgette got these on her way home in the evening, from their favourite frying-cook's stall, sandwiched in next to the wine-shop.

Their unfailing answer to the neighbours' question:

"Hello, Martha, where are you off to?"

"To get two sous' worth of fried potatoes."

"How goes it, Georgette; where are you comin' from?"

"From gettin' two sous' worth of fried potatoes," stuck to them after a time, and people called them the Little Rondefrites.[1]

Mme. Rondefrite sold vegetables and fruit on a barrow, by virtue of Municipal Permit No. 727 obtained on the death of her man, Jules Dame, cab-driver, who used to say: "You can live on two sous' worth of fried potatoes." To that, however, he had always added three absinthes, and some half-pints of wine: white before dinner and red in the evening.

They lived in the Rue de Belleville, on the sixth floor of a house with a wagon entrance leading to a shed, where Mme. Rondefrite kept her barrow. On Sundays she took her daughters for a walk, and, being a decent woman, she roundly abused any man who tried to speak to her.

The girls had to get paying work when they were young, and they did artificial flowers, bead wreaths, ready-made clothing, shoe button-holes, and feather curling, one after the other, in the busy season of each trade. The result of this was that they were fairly good in most lines, but experienced workers in none.

Later on, Georgette took it into her head to specialize, and she became a mounter of artificial flowers at a workroom in the Rue Saint-Denis. In that trade, when there are new models to duplicate, the forewoman generally chooses the nimblest hands for the job—in other words, the champions. In the case of women who work at home, the making-up price is determined by the time required. Three sous are paid for making a spray of Burgundy roses in half an hour. Hence the normal rate: six sous an hour. The champion starts off at a killing pace, to please the forewoman, but after the first hour she is done for. This hustling fixes the rate of pay. A pieceworker, working twelve hours

[1] *Rond de frites*, a penny portion of fried potatoes.

a day, takes an hour to make one of these three-sou sprays of roses.

The forewoman made Georgette Rondefrite enter the lists, for her fingers were very nimble; and the other girls liked her because she didn't prejudice the forewoman against them.

One day a girl, out of work, came to the workroom, grumbling about her rent and her sick husband, and offered herself at ten sous less a day for the work Georgette was doing. She was engaged, and worked hard in order to show her gratitude to the forewoman. Thus the hourly pay was brought down to four sous, and she was nicknamed Vermin.

That evening Georgette was all ready to let fly at her. Vermin took on airs and swept past her, but the rest began to hoot, and she burst into tears.

"I'll dry your tears for you!" cried Georgette. "Couldn't you have landed a job without cutting down the money like that? Why didn't you say so, if you were in trouble? We could have settled that for you." Then she finished by slapping her in the face, but she didn't come to work next morning, for, on the way from the Rue Saint-Denis to Belleville, she found the means of spending a little time without working, in the person of M. Lepiqueur, forty years old, and a wholesale dealer in sponges. Twice a week she helped him to enjoy life, and he helped her to exist.

She kept on doing flowers and, when the need became urgent, men. A well-to-do bachelor, whom she met on the same corner, cut out M. Lepiqueur, and offered her a set of furniture worth four hundred and eighty francs, including a wardrobe with a mirror set in the door; and he gave her a room in the Rue des Petites-Écuries at twenty-five francs a month.

"There's plenty of girls of your age would be mighty glad to have as nice a place," said Mme. Rondefrite, "but I don't approve of it! When I started housekeeping with

your father, I wasn't thinkin' only of pleasure. If I was to box your ears I couldn't keep you at home. It's time you were making out for yourself, but it wrings my heart just the same."

Martha's disapproval of Georgette's irregular behaviour was marked by much more rudeness, and her insults were very bitter, for she was jealous of her well-dressed sister.

Georgette, without any ill-feeling, contributed twenty-five francs a month towards her own lunch; she declared that the fried potatoes to be had in the Rue Saint-Denis had no taste at all compared with those at Belleville, and one Saturday night she brought one of her friends along to appreciate them. Martha was working at some garments in ticking—forty sous a day—and she had a very cold welcome for her sister's friend, who was equally well-dressed.

"So you kick up your heels too, do you?"

"No. I've got a friend. I used to do flowers in the summer and feathers in the winter, and it brought me fifty francs a month. Fifteen to mamma for my lunch; fifteen to the milkman for morning and evening; twelve for my room; and that left me eight to dress myself and to spend on Sundays. It's no fun to see your friends go off to the country when you've got to stay in town and wander about like a lost dog. I can't get along without some kind of fun. If I couldn't go boating in summer and to the theatre in winter I'd die of boredom! With wages like that, you've got to have a man, if you want any peace at all. I've found one who gives me clothes and pays my rent. So much the better for me."

A fluttering of wings took Georgette to the window, where she found the canary in terror at some caterwauling on the next roof. She brought the cage into the room, and covered it with a cloth, whispering kisses to the poor little thing. Then she made room at the window for her friend, and they gazed down at the street below them. Upon the walls there were brilliant squares of light, cast across from the

windows opposite, through which passed rapid silhouettes of the people on the pavements; now and then they could see the slow-moving outline of a prostitute in search of business.

Fruit and vegetables were being offered at reduced prices from the barrows, and these cries came up to the sixth floor, as though distilled from the confused murmur of the street. On each barrow a candle could be seen burning steadily, sheltered from the wind by a half-circle of stiff paper. The shops all had their shutters up, and the bars blazed forth like the mouths of great furnaces with their groups of stokers.

Each of the windows in the opposite wall framed a picture of people with elbows on the sill; behind them, sitting at tables, tired women were hurrying to finish the day's sewing. Circles, tinted according to the colour of the lamp-shades, were thrown upon the ceilings, and showers of bright light fell upon the foreheads of men desperately calculating how to pay for their eating, sleeping and loving.

Above the roofs of the houses all was peaceful, and the strokes of a clock fell upon the stillness like pearls dropping from a broken necklace.

After dinner, Mme. Rondefrite carried some sewing she had finished back to the Rue Réaumur with a friend who had come to help her.

"Take it easy," said Georgette, "they're open till ten on Saturdays."

Martha crossed her knees beneath the piece of ticking she was sewing; Georgette was playing with two spools on the table, and when she stretched out her arms to pick them up you could see a gold bracelet on her left wrist.

"It's just like the workroom here. Always someone scowling," she declared.

Martha burst out scornfully, "Oh, your workroom!"

She stopped her sewing to look at the bracelet, and began to pick the dust out of the cracks in the table with her

needle. Georgette laughed, showing all her well-polished teeth, and Martha threw the ticking in her face.

The stuff unrolled and dragged the lamp from the table to the floor, where it broke—fortunately after it had gone out. The girls didn't scream, but when they had got their breath they were in opposite corners of the dark room, now filled with petroleum fumes. Georgette, standing tiptoe in her twenty-five franc shoes, held a lighted candle as high as her arm would reach, and they could see the soaked ticking and the broken lamp.

"That's a good day's work! You'll have to pay for the ticking and buy another lamp."

Martha wept bitterly at the thought of this crushing responsibility, and then, snuffling up her tears, she wailed: "I'm going to drown myself . . . in the canal . . . it's nearer than the Seine and not so many people. You won't see me any more! I've had enough of this. . . . You always have a good time . . . go to dances . . . people give you jewellery. And I sit here all day long sewing waistcoats! I won't stand it any longer. . . . I'll kill myself. . . ."

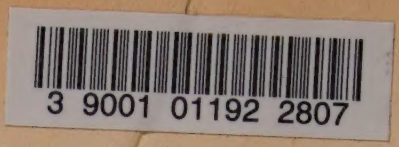
She ran to the window, but Georgette was just as nimble and stronger. She got the better of her and then coaxed, "Stop crying; they'll like you as well as me. Wait a jiffy."

The bracelet was slipped on Martha's wrist, and she held it up to the light, while Georgette did up her hair and changed combs with her.

Their mother, weary with climbing six flights, was just outside the door, and as she entered, Georgette cut short her astonishment at the smell of petroleum: "I upset the lamp, but I'll get a prettier one. . . . I'm going to take Martha along with me to dance to-night. She never goes out."

And Mme. Rondefrite didn't struggle against Fate.

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